# Attachment, caring and prosocial behavior

Ayelet Erez

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## Proefschrift

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# Contents

# Chapter 1

## Introduction: Conceptualizing prosocial behaviors in individual and group settings from the perspective of attachment theory.

# Introduction: Conceptualizing prosocial behaviors in individual and group settings from the perspective of attachment theory.

Researchers have examined the prosocial behavior of caring, manifest by helping, volunteerism, empathy etc. (e.g., Batson, 1991; De Waal, 1996; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 1995). Although the desire to do good, according to Wilson and Musick (1999) is more or less evenly distributed among people, the resources to fulfill that desire are not. Investigators (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; see Penner, 2002 for a review) have recently begun to study those resources, motives, and benefits involved in caring with sustained prosocial activities. Among these continual prosocial involvements are altruistic volunteer activities such as teaching reading to poor children, running errands for the homebound elderly, and regularly donating blood.

To date there have been relatively few theoretical analyses which considered the role of attachment insecurities as they relate to caring as a prosocial behavior in individual and group settings (see Penner, 2002; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000, for preliminary efforts).

The purpose of the current thesis is to conceptualize individual and group prosocial behaviors in terms of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982), and in so doing to uncover some of the psychological mechanisms underlying caring behavior (McCullough & Snyder, 2000). In terms of the resource theory (Wilson and Musick, 1999), one can ask to what extent does secure attachment provide a meaningful resource for prosocial behavior, and at

what level can this behavior be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994).

Therefore, the current study has four purposes;

1. The first is to conceptualize individual and group prosocial behavior, in terms of attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982).
2. The second is to examine the unique explanatory power of attachment patterns beyond the potential contribution of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness) to caring behavior.
3. The third purpose is to examine the role of moral judgment in the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism.
4. Finally, the fourth purpose is to apply attachment theory in understanding intra-group caring behavior.

## Attachment style

Attachment is the unique affective relationship that forms between infants and their primary caretakers (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969). The attachment system is especially apparent during the first years of life, however Bowlby (1979) viewed attachment processes as affecting human beings “from cradle to the grave”. Bowlby’s attachment theory (1969, 1973, 1979, 1980), focused on the process through which infants and young children develop confidence in their caregivers’ protection. According to Bowlby, human beings have a biologically based predisposition to a system of behaviors that promote physical and psychological proximity to a primary caregiver (These behaviors include for example crying, following and looking at the person who serves as a primary caregiver, proximity seeking etc.(Brisch, 2002)

Because of the primacy and depth of the early attachment relationship between infant and caregiver, this bond may serve as a prototype for later life relationships (Brisch, 2002) although early attachments are not supposed to determine later relationships as they remain open to relational experiences throughout and beyond childhood. Its parameters are gradually shaped and altered by social experiences with attachment figures, resulting eventually in fairly stable individual differences in mental representations of past attachment experiences and in a concomitant attachment style – a systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors toward partners and friends that result from a particular attachment history (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Research, beginning with Ainsworth et al. (1978) and continuing through recent studies by social and personality psychologists (reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), indicates that individual differences in attachment style can be measured along two orthogonal dimensions, attachment-related anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). A person's position on the anxiety (or anxious attachment) dimension indicates the degree to which he or she worries that a partner will not be available and responsive in times of need. A person's position on the avoidance dimension indicates the extent to which he or she distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain behavioral independence and emotional distance from partners. Individuals who score low on these two dimensions are said to be secure or to have a secure attachment style.

## Attachment and caring

According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2001), the caregiving system, was presumably selected over the course of human evolution because it contributed to the alleviation of genetically related others' distress and

thereby helped their survival and reproductive success, thus promoting inclusive fitness, and subsequently was gradually extended, beyond those with whom a person shared genes (i.e., children, siblings, and tribe members (Hamilton, 1964) to anyone who was suffering or in need, either by natural generalization or deliberate ethical training (e.g., Hopkins, 2001).

Recently, researchers have begun to examine associations between attachment and caregiving feelings and behaviors (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). Attachment security (i.e., relatively low scores on the avoidance and anxiety dimensions) is related to positive conceptions of self and others, curiosity and interest in exploration, cognitive openness and flexibility, mental health, and relationship satisfaction (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). Security has also been associated with empathy, in children as young as 2 or 3 years of age (Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989; van der Mark, van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2002) and in adults (Mikulincer et al., 2001). Furthermore, it has been found to be associated with sensitive and responsive caregiving toward romantic or marital partners (e.g., Feeney & Collins, 2001) and greater tolerance of out-group members (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). Experimental studies based on attachment theory demonstrate that dispositional and manipulated attachment security facilitate cognitive openness and empathy, strengthen self-transcendent values, and foster tolerance of out-group members, suggesting an effect of one behavioral system, attachment, on another, caring or prosocial behaviors in individual or group settings.

But what might interfere with the innate tendency to provide care to someone who expresses need? Attachment theory suggests that caregiving can be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994) whereas attachment security makes empathy, caregiving and altruism more likely. Only a relatively secure person can easily perceive others not

only as sources of security and support, but also as human beings who themselves need and deserve support. An insecure person may have difficulty finding the mental resources necessary to provide sensitive and effective care to others. In the same way that Ainsworth and others (Ainsworth et al., 1978) showed that a child's exploration system is inhibited or distorted by the need for attachment security in threatening situations, Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, (in press) and others (e.g., B. Feeney & Collins, 2001) have argued that the natural tendency to provide care to dependent or needy others can be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994).

Attachment insecurities have been negatively related to the propensity for caring. For example, anxious or avoidant individuals are less sensitive to their romantic partners' needs, report less cooperative caregiving, and spontaneously offer less comfort and reassurance to their distressed romantic partner. B. Feeney & Collins, 2001; J. Feeney, 1996; J. Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Priel, Mitrany, and Shahar (1998) found that anxious and avoidant high school students were perceived by peers as less supportive than their secure classmates. In addition, insecurely attached students were less likely than secure students to engage in reciprocally supportive relationships. Soerensen, Webster, and Roggman (2002) found that lower scores on the anxiety and avoidance dimensions predicted a person's planning to care for older relatives, suggesting that secure adults are care-oriented even before care is explicitly called for.

## Attachment, Caring and Groups

In the current set of studies we apply attachment theory to the study of small group dynamics to provide a better understanding of individual

differences in the way people react to signals of respect and disrespect from other group members.

Previous studies have found that attachment theory is a relevant framework for exploring individual differences in the context of group interactions (e.g., Rom & Mikulincer, 2003; Smith et al., 1999). Dispositional and manipulated attachment security were found as facilitating empathy and fostering tolerance of out-group members, suggesting an effect of one behavioral system, attachment, on another, caring in a group context (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001). In our study, we used attachment framework as a prism for inquiring about the effects of perceived group respect on group commitment and pro-group behavior. Specifically we wanted to examine whether variations along the attachment anxiety dimension are relevant in explaining individual differences in feelings of group commitment and expenditure of actual effort on behalf of the group following induction of group respect and disrespect.

Although group disrespect is an aversive experience for every group member, the extent to which self-esteem is damaged and the compensatory expenditure of pro-group efforts might depend on a person's susceptibility to signals of rejection and the strength and stability of his or her sense of self-worth. In our view, these individual differences can be interpreted in terms of attachment theory and might depend on a person's attachment insecurities, especially those related to attachment anxiety. These insecurities make a person more susceptible to signals of rejection, shatter the strength and stability of his or her self-esteem (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2005, in press), and therefore can be highly relevant in explaining a person's reactions to signs of group respect and disrespect.

Attachment-anxious individuals' tendency to base their unstable self views on external resources and their sense of self-esteem on others' acceptance or rejection has been well documented (Srivastava and Beer, 2005; Broemer and Blumle, 2003; Andersson & Perris, 2000; Park, Crocker, & Mickelson, 2004). In contrast, less attachment-anxious individuals are more likely to base their self-worth on domains that do not require constant external validation, such as long-term family support. In line with their emphasis on self-reliance, avoidant individuals have been found to be less dependent on interpersonal sources of self-esteem (Park et al., 2004).

We hypothesized that anxious individuals' mental rumination, which heightens the cognitive accessibility of negative self-views and self-related doubts, together with their strong needs for love and acceptance (e.g., Cassidy & Kobak, 1988) might make them particularly susceptible to signals of group respect and disrespect and lead them to display pro-group behaviors as a means to being accepted and loved.

The five studies are described in four main chapters:

***Chapter two*** describes two innovative studies to determine whether the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to real-world altruistic volunteering. We hypothesized that individual differences in attachment anxiety and avoidance would help to explain involvement or lack of involvement in volunteer activities and the motives for volunteering.

Volunteerism has been defined as long-term, planned, prosocial behavior, especially behavior intended to benefit strangers (Penner, 2002). We assessed two aspects of volunteering, the range of activities engaged in and the time devoted to them, and six motives for volunteering (Clary et al., 1998). These included four that might be considered self-serving (self-

protection, self-enhancement, social approval, and career promotion), one that is altruistic (genuine concern for others), and one that is conceptually related to what Bowlby (1969/1982) called the exploration system (learning new things about oneself and the world). Previous research suggests that anxiously attached individuals are especially preoccupied with their own worries about and wishes for security, and that avoidant individuals are less empathic and less cognitively open, and in that sense, less exploration-oriented. Therefore the range of motives covered by the Clary et al. (1998) provided a good opportunity to see whether and how much these two major attachment dimensions are associated with different motives for volunteering.

We expected attachment anxiety to be associated with self-comforting or security-enhancing motives for volunteering, such as volunteering in order to feel included in a group, have higher self-esteem, and feel less troubled by interpersonal problems. We expected attachment avoidance to be related to lower involvement in volunteer activities and less generous and exploration-oriented motives for volunteering.

Another issue examined in this chapter is the possibility that engaging in caring activities can improve a person's sense of social well-being. In attachment-theoretical terms, this possibility is interpreted as a positive effect of the caregiving system on the attachment system. We expected engagement in volunteer activities to be beneficial to anxious individuals, as reflected in lower scores on measures of interpersonal problems (e.g., loneliness, hostility, and lack of assertiveness) as a function of volunteering. A person who has negative models of self and others – mental representations associated with attachment insecurity (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) – can, through helping others, feel more positive about him- or herself and about the value and deservingness of others. Although, as

explained above, insecure attachment generally militates against caregiving, if caregiving is nevertheless undertaken, it may have positive effects on the caregiver, including an improvement in the caregiver's social well-being. Finally, we were interested in determining whether the predicted findings would generalize across differences in societal and cultural norms. Attachment theory was intended to be a general theory, heavily rooted in conceptual and empirical literature on primate ethology. There is nothing in the theory that leads to the prediction of cultural differences, and at least in the case of infant-to-parent attachments, research has turned up much more support for cross-cultural universality than for cultural differences (van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Nevertheless, there are a few published studies suggesting cross-cultural differences in either caring behavior or links between caregiver sensitivity and attachment style (Carlson & Harwood, 2003; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000), so it seemed important to consider the cross-national generalization of our own findings. We decided to conduct the studies in three countries: Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States.

***Chapter three*** focuses on the unique explanatory power of attachment patterns beyond the potential contribution of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness) to volunteerism.

Personality refers to an enduring system of characteristics that individuals carry with them from one situation to the next, affecting their behavior across these contexts. Personality psychologists have argued that individuals with a 'prosocial personality' are more likely to engage in prosocial behavior (Graziano and Eisenberg 1997; Oliner and Oliner 1988; Schroeder et al. 1995). It seems likely that prosocial preferences are important for helping behaviors that produce little or no material gain

(Graziano and Eisenberg 1997). Personality characteristics also determine which situations are attractive to people because people usually select situations that meet their personality (Buss 1987). In general, prosocial personality characteristics should lead people to select situations that enable them to express these traits in overt behavior (Bekkers 2003).

One-hundred and fifty-nine Dutch undergraduates completed self-report scales tapping attachment insecurities, engagement in volunteer activities, motives for volunteering, and high-order personality traits. The results may help to indicate whether the outcomes reported in Chapter two are actually unique for attachment dimensions or a mere reflection of personality traits.

The second issue of the study refers to the interplay between attachment patterns, motives for volunteerism, and volunteerism behavior (i.e., the role that motives for volunteering plays in mediating or moderating the links between attachment insecurities and volunteering behavior). Theoretically, lack of altruistic motives for volunteering should mediate the observed link between attachment avoidance and relatively low engagement in volunteering activities. Highly avoidant people hold negative models of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) therefore may not give any priority to the improvement of others' welfare among their values and goals which, in turn, would directly inhibit any engagement in volunteering behavior. In addition, motives for volunteering can moderate the possible effects of attachment anxiety on volunteering behavior. Although attachment anxiety was not significantly associated with this kind of behavior, it is still possible that attachment-anxious people, who constantly search for others' approval and love, would be particularly prone to engage in volunteering activities where these activities offer some kind of self-focused benefits (e.g., social admiration).

***Chapter four*** describes the relevance of moral judgment to the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism. The role of moral judgment in prosocial behavior has been described frequently (Eisenberg et. al., 1987, 1991; Raviv, Bar-tal, & Lewis-Levin, 1980) and its importance to volunteerism has been emphasized (Allen & Rushton, 1983). According to Kagan (1984), emotions are the basis for acquiring morality. Early maternal attunement described by Ainsworth (1969) and Stern (1985) is the basis for development of a personal identity, empathy for others and for development of a rule-based internal standard that becomes moral reasoning of right and wrong. Also, studies have focused on the negative impact of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) for prosocial behavior (Tavecchio, Stams, Brugman, & Thomeer-Bouwens, 1999) and discussed the attribution of antisocial behavior to lack of a secure attachment bond in infancy (Magid and McKelvey, 1987). Van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra (1995; Van IJzendoorn, 1997) suggested that autonomous attachment could be at the core of mature moral reasoning. Based on those studies and theoretical elaborations we proposed the hypothesis that moral judgment may interfere with the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism. In other words, one may ask how two insecure people would differ in their levels of volunteerism, if one person would function at a low level of moral judgment and the other person on a high level.

One-hundred and thity-nine Dutch undergraduates completed self-report scales tapping attachment insecurities, engagement in volunteer activities, motives for volunteering, and they completed a moral judgment scale (the Defining Issues Test, DIT). The findings may shed light on the extent to which morality is involved in the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism.

***Chapter five***: Previous research has demonstrated that intra-group respect can strengthen people's group identification, and encourage them to exert themselves on behalf of their group (De Cremer, 2003; Simon & Sturmer, 2003; Smith & Tyler, 1997; Smith, Tyler, Huo, Ortiz, & Lind, 1998; Tyler & Blader, 2000, 2001, 2002; Tyler & Smith, 1998).

In Chapter five we examine the susceptibility to intragroup respect/ disrespect from the perspective of individual attachment orientation. We ask what happens to the caring system under inductions of group respect and disrespect, assuming that variations along the attachment anxiety dimension would determine the extent to which these inductions would lead to heightened group commitment and enhanced caring behavior towards the group. Specifically, attachment-anxious people tend to base their sense of self-worth on others' love and acceptance, depend on continual validation from others, and display extreme susceptibility to others' positive and negative reactions. As a result, group respect can lead attachment-anxious people to feel appreciated and valued, temporarily pacifying their chronic self-doubts and can then enhance group commitment and pro-group motives and caring behaviors. Group disrespect can remind attachment-anxious people of their worthlessness, strengthening worries concerning acceptance and approval by other group members, and then can lead them to higher effort expenditure on behalf of their group. On this basis, we hypothesize that people scoring higher on attachment anxiety would be more likely to show the "respect-beneficial effort polarity effect" (Sleebos et al., 2006b). That is, both high and low respect responses from other group members would lead attachment-anxious people to show effort expenditure.

In our view, highly avoidant people would not show enhanced group commitment and pro-group behavior following inductions of group respect or disrespect. These people dismiss others' feedback, do not derive their self-

worth from others' approval, and tend to suppress distressing thoughts and repress painful emotions (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

On this basis, we predicted that attachment anxiety but not avoidance would moderate the effects of group respect and disrespect on group commitment, group-related worries, and pro-group behaviors; (1) As compared to an average group respect condition, inductions of high group respect and low group respect would lead to higher effort expenditure in group tasks among participants scoring high on attachment anxiety, but not among less anxious participants. (2) Inductions of low group respect would lead to higher levels of group-related worries, lower group commitment but to more money donation to the group and higher effort expenditure than the average group respect condition among participants scoring high on attachment anxiety, but not among less anxious participants.

In the final chapter six the findings of this series of studies will be summarized and discussed in the light of recent theoretical and empirical work on prosocial behaviors in group settings and on attachment in adults. The main hypothesis of the current work suggests that attachment style, and in particular attachment anxiety, affects prosocial behavior in groups and in natural settings, at least under specific conditions. In the closing chapter the evidence supporting this hypothesis as well as its specifications will be delineated, and issues for future research will be derived from the current attempts to test the idea that attachment and caring are intimately related.

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# Chapter 2

## Attachment, Caregiving, and Volunteering: Placing Volunteerism in an Attachment-Theoretical Framework

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# Attachment, Caregiving, and Volunteering: Placing Volunteerism in an Attachment-Theoretical Framework


## Abstract

*Recent studies based on attachment theory demonstrate that dispositional and experimentally manipulated attachment security facilitate cognitive openness and empathy, strengthen self-transcendent values, and foster tolerance of out-group members, suggesting an effect of one behavioral system, attachment, on another, caregiving. Here we report two studies conducted in three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States) to determine whether the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to real-world altruistic volunteering. In both studies and across the three locations, avoidant attachment was related to volunteering less and having less altruistic and exploration-oriented motives for volunteering. Anxious attachment was related to self-enhancing motives for volunteering. Additional results suggested that volunteering ameliorates the interpersonal problems of individuals high in anxiety, and that volunteering has more beneficial effects if it is done for altruistic reasons. Future directions for experimental research on this topic are outlined.*


## Introduction

Social scientists have expended a great deal of time, energy, and brainpower documenting human beings' proclivities for selfishness, prejudice, aggression, and violence. Along the way, as a counter theme, some (e.g., Batson, 1991; De Waal, 1996; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio, &

Piliavin, 1995) have focused on virtues such as empathy, compassion, altruism, and other forms of prosocial emotion and behavior. In recent years, investigators (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; see Penner, 2002 for a review) have begun to study the predispositions, motives, and benefits involved in helping others and have looked beyond single altruistic acts (such as helping in an emergency) to sustained prosocial activities. Among these sustained prosocial involvements are altruistic volunteer activities such as teaching reading to poor children, running errands for the homebound elderly, and regularly donating blood.

Volunteerism has been defined as long-term, planned, prosocial behavior, especially behavior intended to benefit strangers (Penner, 2002). Scores of studies have dealt with volunteerism (e.g., Choi, 2003; Snyder & Clary, 2004), but to date there have been relatively few theoretical analyses linking volunteerism to broad psychological theories (see Penner, 2002; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000, for preliminary efforts). The purpose of the present article is to conceptualize altruism, including its manifestations in volunteerism, in terms of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982), and in so doing to uncover some of the psychological mechanisms underlying helping behavior and other forms of prosocial and virtuous behavior (McCullough & Snyder, 2000).

## Attachment Theory and Research

According to attachment theory (e.g., Bowlby, 1969/1982), human beings are innately equipped with attachment and caregiving behavioral systems, among other important behavioral systems (e.g., exploration, sexual mating) because, during evolution, becoming emotionally attached to caregivers (e.g., parents) and providing care for dependent or injured

individuals (e.g., infants, injured family members) enhanced inclusive fitness. As Bowlby (1969/1982) used the term, a behavioral system is a species-universal, innate neural program that organizes an individual's behavior in ways that serve an important survival or reproductive function (Belsky, 1999). Each behavioral system governs the choice, activation, and termination of particular kinds of behavioral sequences. According to Bowlby (1969/1982), the function of the attachment behavioral system is to protect a person from danger by assuring that he or she maintains proximity to caring and supportive others (attachment figures). The function of the caregiving system is to respond to requests for help and provide protection, support, and relief in times of adversity. Its operation is most evident in the emotional and behavioral reactions of parents to their young offsprings' signals of need or distress, but it is also considered to be the locus and foundation of empathy and compassion in all situations where one person reacts to another person's pain, need, or distress.

The attachment system is especially apparent during the first years of life, but it continues to be important across the lifespan. Its parameters are gradually shaped and altered by social experiences with attachment figures, resulting eventually in fairly stable individual differences in mental representations of past attachment experiences and in a concomitant attachment style – a systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors that results from a particular attachment history (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Research, beginning with Ainsworth et al. (1978) and continuing through recent studies by social and personality psychologists (reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), indicates that individual differences in attachment style can be measured along two orthogonal dimensions, attachment-related anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). A person's position on the anxiety (or anxious attachment)

dimension indicates the degree to which he or she worries that a partner will not be available and responsive in times of need. A person's position on the avoidance dimension indicates the extent to which he or she distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain behavioral independence and emotional distance from partners. People who score low on these two dimensions are said to be secure or to have a secure attachment style.

## Attachment and Caregiving

Since the mid-1980s, scores of studies have shown that a person's attachment style, assessed with fairly simple, two-dimensional self-report measures, is a powerful predictor of various psychological phenomena including self- and social schemas, self-regulation of stress and emotion, the quality of relationships with romantic or marital partners, sexual motivation, and reactions to relationship breakup or loss (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003). Attachment security (i.e., relatively low scores on the avoidance and anxiety dimensions) is related to positive conceptions of self and others, curiosity and interest in exploration, cognitive openness and flexibility, mental health, and relationship satisfaction (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). Of special interest here, security has also been associated with empathy, in children as young as 2 or 3 years of age (Kestenbaum, Farber, & Sroufe, 1989; van der Mark, van IJzendoorn & Bakermans-Kranenburg, 2002) and in adults (Mikulincer et al., 2001). It has also been associated with sensitive and responsive caregiving toward romantic or marital partners (e.g., Feeney & Collins, 2001) and greater tolerance of out-group members (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2001).

Attachment researchers view the association between attachment security and responsive caregiving as an example of the effects of one

behavioral system, attachment, on another, caregiving (George & Solomon, 1999). This kind of effect was demonstrated first, not with respect to caregiving, but with respect to another behavioral system, exploration. Ainsworth and others (Ainsworth et al., 1978) showed that a child's exploration system is inhibited or distorted by the need for attachment security in strange or threatening situations. Secure children know that if they encounter difficulties, their security-providing attachment figure will be available to help. Over time, this sense of security supports exploration even when an attachment figure is not immediately available. (See Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004, for an extension to adults of this notion of internalized resources related to attachment security.) Anxious children are so preoccupied with parental availability and responsiveness that they explore less confidently and coherently. Avoidant children use exploration as a distraction from anxiety, and hence play in a rather obsessive, uncreative way (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

We (Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, in press) and others (e.g., B. Feeney & Collins, 2001) have argued that the natural tendency to provide care to dependent or needy others can also be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994). Under conditions of threat, adults often think of turning to others for support and comfort rather than thinking first of providing care to others. At such times they are likely to be so focused on their own vulnerability that they lack the mental resources necessary to attend compassionately to other people's need for help. Only when relief is attained and a sense of attachment security is restored can a person easily direct attention and energy to other behavioral systems. Only a relatively secure person can easily perceive others not only as sources of security and support, but also as human beings who themselves need and

deserve support. An insecure person may have difficulty finding the mental resources necessary to provide sensitive and effective care to others.

From the perspective of attachment theory (as well as that of Batson, 1991, who conducted pioneering research on empathy and altruism), the caregiving system is inherently altruistic (van der Mark et al., 2002). It was presumably selected over the course of human evolution because it contributed to the alleviation of others' distress and thereby contributed to their survival and reproductive success, although originally these "others" would have been mainly children, siblings, and tribe members with whom a person shared genes (Hamilton, 1964). Just as attachment-related motives, once they became a universal part of the human psychological repertoire, could affect a broad variety of social processes (as reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003), caregiving motives can also be extended to anyone who is suffering or in need, either by natural generalization or deliberate ethical training (e.g., Hopkins, 2001). From this theoretical perspective, it is as reasonable to wonder what interferes with the innate tendency to provide care to someone who expresses need as it is to ask what special interventions are necessary to encourage empathy and altruism. Attachment theory suggests that attachment-related insecurities impede altruism whereas attachment security makes empathy and altruism more likely.

Recently, researchers have begun to examine associations between the attachment and caregiving systems and the combined effects of these systems on prosocial feelings and behaviors. For example, Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) showed that subliminal or supraliminal enhancement of people's sense of security, increased their willingness to interact with threatening out-group members, and that higher scores on the attachment anxiety dimension were negatively associated with this willingness. Mikulincer et al. (2001) and Mikulincer, Shaver, and Gillath (2004) found

that contextual heightening of the sense of attachment security increased compassionate responses to others' suffering. The findings also revealed that higher scores on attachment avoidance were negatively associated with empathic reactions to others' suffering, including being willing to help a distressed person. Higher scores on the anxiety dimension were associated with personal distress in response to another's suffering, but not with actual helping. Anxiety appears to encourage self-preoccupation and a form of distress that, while aroused partly by empathy, fails to facilitate caregiving. In effect, people who score high on the attachment anxiety dimension are quick to occupy the role of needy person themselves, thereby disrupting effective compassion for others. In other recent studies (Mikulincer et al., 2003), experimentally engendered security increased the endorsement of two "self-transcendence values" (Schwartz, 1992), benevolence and universalism, which encourage caregiving. In these studies, higher scores on the avoidance dimension were negatively associated with endorsement of these values.

In studies conducted outside our research group, attachment insecurities haves also been negatively related to the propensity for caregiving. For example, individuals who score high on anxiety or avoidance are less sensitive to their romantic partners' needs, report less cooperative caregiving, and spontaneously offer less comfort and reassurance to their distressed romantic partner (e.g., B. Feeney & Collins, 2001; J. Feeney, 1996; J. Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Simpson, Rholes, & Nelligan, 1992). Priel, Mitrany, and Shahar (1998) found that high school students who are high on anxiety or avoidance were perceived by peers as less supportive than their secure classmates. In addition, insecurely attached students were less likely than secure students to engage in reciprocally supportive relationships. Soerensen, Webster, and Roggman (2002) found that lower scores on the

anxiety and avoidance dimensions predicted a person's planning to care for older relatives, suggesting that secure adults are care-oriented even before care is explicitly called for.

## Volunteerism

Although the findings discussed so far consistently reveal an association between attachment security and compassionate reactions to others' needs, researchers have not examined the kinds of real-world caring for strangers that might also engage the caregiving behavioral system. Moreover, researchers who study volunteerism and some of the personality characteristics related to it (e.g., Penner, 2002) have not focused on attachment style. There is, however, a substantial body of work (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998) suggesting that personal motives play an important role in volunteerism. In a longitudinal study, for example, Penner and Finkelstein (1998) measured the motives of people who volunteered to help AIDS victims over an extended period of time. They found that motives associated with having and expressing altruistic values correlated significantly with both the number of AIDS-related activities a person was involved in and the amount of time he or she devoted to such activities. Clary and Orenstein (1991) and Davis, Hall, and Meyer (2003) obtained similar results in studies of other kinds of volunteer activities.

In the studies reported in the present article, we assessed two aspects of volunteering, the range of activities engaged in and the time devoted to them, and six motives for volunteering (Clary et al., 1998), including four that might be considered self-serving (self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, and career promotion), one that is altruistic (genuine concern for others), and one that is conceptually related to what Bowlby

(1969/1982) called the exploration system (learning new things about oneself and the world). Since previous research suggests that anxiously attached individuals are especially preoccupied with their own worries about and wishes for security, and that avoidant individuals are less empathic and less cognitively open (and in that sense, less exploration-oriented), the range of motives covered by the Clary et al. (1998) scales provided a good opportunity to see whether and how much these two major attachment dimensions are associated with different motives for volunteering.

The distinction between volunteering for self-serving versus altruistic reasons is conceptually related to Batson's (1991) distinction between personal distress and empathy. Personal distress can promote helping for self-centered reasons (e.g., to repair one's own mood, to boost one's self-esteem). Mikulincer at al. (2001) found that this self-serving orientation was related to high scores on the attachment anxiety dimension. Empathy moves a person beyond selfish motives to the wish to meet the needs of another person. Mikulincer et al. (2001, 2003) found that this altruistic orientation was inversely related to the avoidance dimension.

## Hypotheses

Based on this line of reasoning, we hypothesized that individual differences in attachment anxiety and avoidance would help to explain involvement or lack of involvement in volunteer activities and the motives for volunteering. Specifically, attachment avoidance, which has already been associated with lack of empathic, helping responses to people in distress, low scores on measures of self-transcendent values, and cognitive closure rather than openness (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review), was expected to be associated with lower involvement in volunteering and less altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons for volunteering. Attachment anxiety,

which has already been associated with personal distress while witnessing others' distress, self-related worries, and excessive reassurance seeking (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review), would also be associated with more self-soothing or self-enhancing reasons for volunteering. That is, we predicted that anxiously attached individuals would be likely to engage in volunteer activities so as to be socially accepted and appreciated or to feel better about themselves. Because people who are high in anxiety might be more willing than less anxious people to volunteer for these kinds of reasons, but might be less willing to volunteer for altruistic reasons, we made no predictions about the amount of volunteering people high in anxiety would engage in overall.

Another issue examined in a preliminary way in the present article is the possibility that engaging in caregiving activities can improve a person's sense of social wellbeing. In attachment-theoretical terms, this possibility is interpreted as a positive effect of the caregiving system on the attachment system. A person who has negative models of self and others – mental representations associated with attachment insecurity (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) – can, through helping others, feel more positive about himself or herself and about the value and deservingness of others. Although, as explained above, insecure attachment generally militates against caregiving, if caregiving is nevertheless undertaken, it may have positive effects on the caregiver, including an improvement in the caregiver's social wellbeing.

Compatible with these ideas, research has shown that volunteering can benefit the help provider as well as the help receiver (e.g., Musick, Herzog, & House, 1999; Oman, Thoresen, & McMahon, 1999). Benefits of helping include better mental and physical health, greater life satisfaction, larger social networks, and a further expansion of altruistic behavior (e.g.,

Armstrong, Korba, & Emard, 1995; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003; Oman et al. 1999). Based on such findings and the possibility that positive caregiving might feed back favorably on the attachment system, just as the attachment system can promote caregiving, we predicted that volunteering would result in lower levels of interpersonal problems, especially for anxiously attached individuals, who tend to seek social acceptance and appreciation. It seemed likely that, just as we expected individuals high in anxiety to be motivated partly by personal distress rather than other-focused altruism, they would also benefit from taking part in volunteer activities, which might increase their sense of being worthy, efficacious, and appreciated, hence less lonely and less troubled by interpersonal problems. This beneficial effect of volunteerism was expected to be less notable among highly avoidant persons, because they are not particularly concerned with social acceptance and generally try to maintain a positive self-view without engaging in satisfying interactions with needy others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003).

To summarize, in the two studies reported here, we expected attachment anxiety to be associated with self-comforting or security-enhancing motives for volunteering, such as volunteering in order to feel included in a group, have higher self-esteem, and feel less troubled by interpersonal problems. We expected attachment avoidance to be related to lower involvement in volunteer activities and less generous and exploration-oriented motives for volunteering. We also expected engagement in volunteer activities to be associated with lower scores on measures of interpersonal problems (e.g., loneliness, hostility, and lack of assertiveness), especially among individuals high in anxiety, as a function of volunteering.

Finally, we were interested in determining whether the predicted findings would generalize across differences in societal and cultural norms.

Attachment theory was intended to be a general theory, heavily rooted in conceptual and empirical literatures on primate ethology. There is nothing in the theory that leads to the prediction of cultural differences, and at least in the case of infant-to-parent attachments, research has turned up much more support for cross-cultural universality than for cultural differences (van IJzendoorn & Sagi, 1999). Nevertheless, there are a few published studies suggesting cross-cultural differences in either caregiving behavior or links between caregiver sensitivity and attachment style (Carlson & Harwood, 2003; Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000), so it seemed important to consider the cross-national generalizability of our own findings. We decided to conduct the studies reported here in our three countries: Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States. Although these are all modern, "western" societies, selected mainly on the basis of familiarity and convenience, they do differ in numerous ways (e.g., size, religiosity, threat of military violence, political values) while offering a similar range of volunteer activities for college-aged individuals, allowing us to use the same volunteerism measures in all three countries. If the findings are similar across these three societies, the relations between attachment dimensions and volunteerism variables are at least not unique to a single location. Further research is still necessary to see whether the findings generalize beyond these three societies.

## Study 1

In Study 1, we examined the association between attachment dimensions and various aspects of volunteerism in three different countries: Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States. The main purpose of Study 1 was to determine whether or not volunteering, viewed as a form of

caregiving, is related to the two dimensions of attachment style, anxiety and avoidance.

***Method***

Participants: Study 1 included three samples: (a) an American group consisting of 129 undergraduates at the University of California, Davis (66 women and 63 men, ranging in age from 19 to 29 years, Mdn = 21), (b) a Dutch sample of 141 undergraduates from Leiden University (100 women and 41 men, ranging in age from 19 to 34 years, Mdn = 22), and (c) an Israeli sample of 104 undergraduates from Bar-Ilan University (55 women and 49 men, ranging in age from 19 to 35 years, Mdn = 23). In neither this study nor Study 2 were there any significant gender differences on any of the measured variables or any significant interactions involving gender. Therefore, the results from both studies are presented without regard to gender.

The American sample consisted of 115 single and 14 married individuals; the Dutch sample, of 130 single and 11 married individuals; and the Israeli sample, of 91 single and 13 married individuals. The three samples were roughly equal in terms of father and mother's education levels. The samples differed somewhat in age, with the Israeli sample being the oldest, perhaps mainly because most undergraduates in Israel begin their university studies only after completing compulsory military service (women at the age of 20, men at the age of 21).

***Materials and procedure***

Participants in all three samples received the same battery of questionnaires (each sample in its own language, English, Dutch, or Hebrew). Considerable care was taken in translating and back-translating

each version of the questionnaire until all three versions seemed maximally similar. The questionnaire battery included scales assessing the attachment dimensions, volunteerism, and reasons for volunteering. Participants completed the battery in small groups of 5-15 participants. The order of the questionnaires was randomized across participants.

Attachment orientation was assessed with the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998), a 36-item self-report instrument designed to measure attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Participants were asked to think about their close relationships, without focusing on a specific partner, and rate the extent to which each item accurately described their feelings in close relationships, using a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (7). Eighteen items tapped attachment anxiety (e.g., “I worry about being abandoned,” “I worry a lot about my relationships”) and 18 items tapped avoidance (e.g., “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down,” “I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close”). The reliability and construct validity of the two subscales have been demonstrated in a wide variety of samples and in different languages (e.g., Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer & Florian, 2000).

In our samples, Cronbach alphas were acceptable for the 18 anxiety items (0.92 for the American sample, 0.89 for the Dutch sample, and 0.87 for the Israeli sample) and the 18 avoidance items (0.94 for the American sample, 0.90 for the Dutch sample, and 0.92 for the Israeli sample). Two scores were computed by averaging items on each subscale after appropriately reverse-scoring some of the items. The anxiety and avoidance scores were not significantly associated in any of the three samples (rs ranged from 0.06 to 0.11), supporting Brennan et al.’s (1998) and

Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) claims about the orthogonality of the anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

Volunteerism was assessed with a 26-item scale, constructed especially for this project, listing different volunteer activities (e.g., teaching reading, counseling troubled people, providing health care to the sick) and tapping the number of activities a participant volunteered for and the time he or she devoted to each of them. Each item named a particular volunteer activity, and participants were asked to indicate whether or not they had engaged in it during the past year, and if so, how much time they had devoted to it. The time assessments were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "once a year" (1) to "almost every day" (7). For each participant, we computed two total scores: (a) Number of Volunteer Activities – the number of activities a participant marked in the list, and (b) Time Devoted to Volunteer Activities – the averaged time assessments across all the activities a participant marked. (The scale and some descriptive information for the three samples are shown in the Appendix.)1

Scale development consisted of the following steps. In the first step, 30 American and 30 Israeli undergraduates were asked to list and describe any philanthropic volunteer activities in which they had engaged during the past few years. They were asked to list as many activities as they actually engaged in, without regard to the time devoted to each one. These descriptions were content analyzed and used to compile a list of 98 non-redundant activities reported by more than 5% of the participants in each sample. This list did not constitute a comprehensive list of all possible volunteer activities, but it did include the most common ones reported by American and Israeli undergraduates.

In the next step of measure development, two judges (one American and one Israeli psychology graduate student) independently divided the list

into 9 categories (community activities, pro bono professional work, activities in hospitals, shelters, religious organizations, counseling centers, nonprofit organizations, government, and educational settings). The judges agreed on more than 95% of the cases, reflecting high inter-judge reliability. They then chose from each category the three items that were most frequently reported in both the American and Israeli samples. Only in one category was it impossible to find three items that were frequently reported in the two samples. As a result, this category included only 2 items, yielding a final list of volunteer activities that included 26 items. Later, the list was translated into Dutch and 20 Dutch undergraduates were asked about the extent to which the listed activities were representative of the activities that Dutch undergraduates tend to volunteer for. All 26 items were considered highly representative of undergraduates' volunteer activities, so the same items were used in all three countries.

To assess motives for volunteering, participants completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998), which consists of 30 items tapping six major motives or reasons for volunteering (5 items per motive). One scale taps altruistic reasons: Values – expressing values related to altruistic and humanitarian concern for others (e.g., "I feel compassion toward people in need," "I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving"). Another scale taps exploration-related reasons for volunteering (e.g., gaining new learning experiences and exercising one's skills and abilities) and is called Understanding. Sample items include: "Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands-on experience" and "Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things." The other four scales assess what we consider to be more self-soothing or self-serving motives for volunteering: Career – enhancing one's own career opportunities (e.g., "I can make new contacts that might help my business or career,"

"Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work"); Self-Enhancement (which Clary et al., 1998, called "Enhancement") – enhancing one's own self-esteem (e.g., "Volunteering makes me feel important," "Volunteering makes me feel better about myself"); Social – conforming to social norms and fitting in with friends (e.g., "People I'm close to want me to volunteer"); and Self-Protection (which Clary et al., 1998, called "Protective") – escaping from negative feelings (e.g., "Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles"). Participants were asked to think about all of their volunteer activities, if they engaged in more than one, and then to read each VFI item and rate how important this reason for volunteering generally was to them. Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all an important/accurate reason" (1) to "a very important/accurate reason" (7).

Previous studies (e.g., Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Clary et al., 1998) have shown that the VFI is reliable and have corroborated its six-factor structure. In our Study 1 samples, Cronbach alphas for the six VFI scales were adequately high (ranging from 0.82 to 0.89 in the American sample, 0.76 to 0.83 in the Dutch sample, and 0.83 to 0.91 in the Israeli sample). We therefore computed six scores for each participant by averaging items on each of the six motive scales. Higher scores indicate greater importance or accuracy in accounting for a person's volunteer activity. Across the three samples, there were significant correlations among the VFI scales, with those between Values and Understanding ranging from 0.57 to 0.63, and all of the others ranging from 0.26 to 0.48. Since none of the correlations approached the alpha values of the scales, we analyzed the scales separately rather than combining them.

Interestingly, no significant association was found between the six VFI scores and the two total volunteerism scores (number of volunteer

activities and time devoted to volunteer activities) in any of the three samples. This finding implies that variations in motives for volunteering are not a reflection of a person's engagement in volunteer activities and that at least in our samples these two kinds of variables are not confounded. At a conceptual level, it seems that engagement in volunteer activities is not due to a single altruistic or self-serving motive, but can occur for a variety of reasons.

***Results and Discussion***

Preliminary analyses: Before examining the contribution of attachment dimensions to volunteerism in each of the three samples, we examined differences between the samples. A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed a significant difference between the three samples, $F(20, 558) = 6.41$, $p < 0.01$, across the set of variables under study. Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) revealed significant differences only in the number of volunteer activities, $F(2, 288) = 7.26$, $p < 0.01$, and two of the motives for volunteering – Understanding, $F(2, 288) = 5.14$, $p < 0.01$, and Career, $F(2, 288) = 15.27$, $p < 0.01$. No significant cross-national differences were found for the two attachment dimensions.

Scheffé post-hoc tests revealed the following significant differences. First, American and Israeli participants reported being engaged in more volunteer activities (M = 6.50, M = 6.22) than Dutch participants (M = 4.46). Second, American participants attached more importance to understanding as a reason for volunteering (M = 5.08) than Dutch participants (M = 4.41). The mean for the Israeli participants (M = 4.78) was in the middle of the other two means. Third, American participants attached more importance to career promotion as a reason for volunteering (M = 5.05) than Israeli and Dutch participants (M = 3.99, M = 4.09).

The association between attachment dimensions and volunteerism: To determine the unique contributions of attachment dimensions to the volunteerism variables, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses for each sample. In these regressions, the number of volunteer activities a person reported, the time he or she devoted to these activities, and the six VFI scores were the dependent variables. In the first step of each regression analysis, we entered attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance as predictors (after centering these variables). In the second step, we added the interaction between anxiety and avoidance (the product term) as another predictor.

The regressions yielded similar findings in all three samples. With the exception of career advancement as a reason for volunteering, attachment scores made significant unique contributions to volunteerism variables and explained between 8.5% and 15.2% of the variance in the Israeli sample, between 7.8% and 29.6% in the Dutch sample, and between 7.1% and 17.5% in the American sample. Since none of the interactions between anxiety and avoidance were significant, we will focus here on the unique, independent contributions of attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance to accounting for variance in volunteerism. Table 1 displays Pearson correlations between each of the attachment dimensions and the volunteerism variables, along with the standardized regression coefficients (betas) for each attachment dimension.

In all three samples, attachment avoidance was significantly associated with, and made significant unique contributions to explaining, the number of volunteer activities engaged in, the time devoted to them, and the endorsement of altruistic values and understanding (exploration) as reasons for volunteering (see Table 1). The higher the avoidance score, the fewer activities participants volunteered for, the less time they devoted to these

activities, and the weaker was their endorsement of altruistic values and understanding as reasons for volunteering. All three findings – regarding less volunteering and less motivation based on exploration-oriented and altruistic values as function of avoidance – were as predicted.

In all three samples, attachment anxiety was significantly associated with, and made a significant unique contribution to, self-centered reasons for volunteering, except for career enhancement. The higher the attachment anxiety score, the higher the endorsement of self-enhancement, social, and self-protection reasons for volunteering (see Table 1). Attachment anxiety was not significantly associated with, and did not make a significant unique contribution to, the number of volunteer activities or the time devoted to such activities in the American and Dutch samples. Thus, although individuals high in anxiety endorsed various self-enhancing reasons for volunteering, their degree of volunteering was not greater than that of less anxious individuals among American and Dutch students. In the Israeli sample, however, attachment anxiety made a significant unique contribution to the number of volunteer activities, with higher attachment anxiety being associated with volunteering for more activities.

***Conclusions***

Overall, the results of Study 1 were in line with our hypotheses. Whereas avoidant attachment was associated with less engagement in volunteer activities and lower endorsement of altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons for volunteering, anxious attachment was associated with more self-soothing and self-promoting reasons for volunteering. While there were a few cross-national differences (discussed in the General Discussion section), the general pattern of findings was similar across samples. We were

therefore encouraged to replicate and extend the study in the same three societies.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we pursued two main goals. The first was to evaluate the replicability of Study 1's findings in a new set of samples. The second goal was to explore in a preliminary way the possibility that engagement in volunteer activities is beneficial for insecure individuals, especially those with an anxious attachment orientation. That is, in the language of attachment theory, we examined the possibility that engagement in caregiving activities weakens the link between anxious attachment and interpersonal problems. This might occur for at least two reasons: (1) to the extent that anxious individuals volunteer to feel more efficacious, valuable, or appreciated, volunteering might actually have those effects, resulting in decreased self-assessments of interpersonal problems; (2) focusing on caregiving rather than one's own needs, might result in a slightly changed self-conception, leaving a person with more images of self as a loving, helpful person rather than a needy person. We thought this effect would be especially interesting if it occurred most strongly when an insecure person engaged in volunteer activities for altruistic, other-valuing reasons, because it might imply that caring for others as an expression of loving-kindness, rather than as an expression of selfish needs, is especially beneficial, a view often advocated by religious writers (e.g., His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1999). If initial support for this idea was obtained, we could then look into it more thoroughly in subsequent studies.

Previous research has consistently shown that attachment anxiety and avoidance are associated with higher levels of loneliness and interpersonal problems (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Hazan & Shaver, 1987;

Mickelson, Kessler, & Shaver, 1997). We were interested in the possibility that participating in volunteer activities might weaken this connection due to the satisfying social experiences, increased sense of personal value and self-efficacy, and receipt of expressions of gratitude that can accompany volunteering to help others. In Study 2, new samples in Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States completed the scales used in Study 1 (the ECR, our 26-item measure of volunteer activities, and the VFI) as well as the UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau, & Cutrona, 1980) and the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems, a well-validated measure of relational problems such as being socially avoidant, lacking in assertiveness, and being exploited by others (IIP; Horowitz et al., 1988).

***Method***

Participants: Study 2 involved three samples: (a) an American sample of 106 undergraduates at the University of California, Davis (77 women and 29 men, ranging in age from 19 to 32 years, Mdn = 21), (b) a Dutch sample of 140 undergraduates from Leiden University (96 women and 44 men, ranging in age from 19 to 35 years, Mdn = 23), and (c) an Israeli sample of 100 undergraduates from Bar-Ilan University (68 women and 32 men, ranging in age from 19 to 32 years, Mdn = 23). The American sample consisted of 94 single and 12 married participants; the Dutch sample, of 128 single and 12 married participants, and the Israeli sample, of 88 single and 12 married participants.

Materials and procedure: Participants completed a battery of self-report questionnaires (each sample in its own language, English, Dutch, or Hebrew) in small groups of 5-15 participants. The order of the questionnaires was randomized across participants.

In Study 2, reliability analyses for the ECR, volunteerism, and VFI scales produced results similar to those of Study 1. With regard to the ECR, Cronbach alphas were high for the 18 anxiety items (0.84 for the Israeli sample, 0.88 for the Dutch sample, and 0.92 for the American sample) and the 18 avoidance items (0.91, 0.92, and 0.95). As expected theoretically and as found in Study 1, the two dimensions were not significantly correlated in any of the three samples (rs ranged from 0.09 to 0.14). With regard to our volunteerism scale, we computed two scores: (a) Number of Volunteer Activities – the number of activities a participant had engaged in during the last year, and (b) Time Devoted to Volunteer Activities – the average frequency rating across all of the activities engaged in during the past year. Cronbach alphas for the Time ratings were adequate in all three samples (0.75, 0.77, and 0.72). With regard to the VFI, Cronbach alphas for the six motives for volunteering were adequate (ranging from 0.75 to 0.84 in the Israeli sample, 0.79 to 0.87 in the Dutch sample, and 0.83 to 0.90 in the American sample). The pattern of correlations between the six VFI subscales was highly similar to that observed in Study 1.

Participants also completed the 20-item UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980). They were asked to indicate, using a 4-point scale (1 = not at all, 4 = very often), how often they experienced the feelings mentioned in the items. High scores indicate greater loneliness. In our samples, Cronbach alphas for the UCLA scale were high (0.86 for the Israeli sample, 0.91 for the Dutch sample, and 0.92 for the American sample).

The 64-item IIP (Horowitz et al., 1988) taps interpersonal difficulties that people may have while interacting or attempting to interact with others. Difficulties are assessed with two kinds of items: those referring to “things that are hard for you to do” (e.g., “It is hard for me to say ‘no’ to other people”) and those referring to “Things that you do too much” (e.g., “I trust

other people too much"). Participants were instructed as follows: "For each item, rate how much of a problem that item has been for you." Ratings were made on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 ("not at all") to 4 ("Extremely").

The 64 IIP items form 8 subscales (with 8 items per scale), each tapping a specific category of interpersonal problems: domineering, vindictive, cold, socially avoidant, nonassertive, exploitable, overly nurturant, and intrusive. Previous studies have validated the 8-factor structure (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Horowitz et al., 1988). In our samples, coefficient alphas for the 8 IIP subscales were high (ranging from 0.83 to 0.87 in the Israeli sample, 0.80 to 0.89 in the Dutch sample, and 0.83 to 0.91 in the American sample). An overall interpersonal problems score was also calculated by averaging all 64 items. Alphas for the overall score were 0.93 for the Israeli sample, 0.93 for the Dutch sample, and .92 for the American sample. To save space in the present article, we report results only for the overall score 0.2 Pearson correlations yielded significant associations between the loneliness and the total IIP score; the rs ranged from 0.40 to 0.57, all $p$'s < 0.01.

***Results and Discussion***

Preliminary analyses: Before examining associations between the attachment dimensions, volunteerism, and interpersonal problems in each of the three samples, we examined differences between these samples on all the measures. A multivariate analysis of variance revealed a significant difference between the three samples, F (24, 622) = 8.93, $p$ < 0.01. As in Study 1, univariate ANOVAs revealed significant differences only in the number of volunteer activities, F(2, 322) = 19.39, $p$ < 0.01, and in two reasons for volunteering – Understanding, F(2, 322) = 6.52, p < 0.01, and Career, F(2, 322) = 23.70, $p$ < 0.01. No significant cross-national differences

were found in attachment, loneliness, or IIP scores. Scheffé tests revealed that American participants engaged in more volunteer activities (M = 8.15) than Dutch or Israeli participants (M = 4.95, M = 5.52). In addition, American participants attached more importance to understanding and career reasons for volunteering (M = 5.25, M = 5.09) than Dutch (M = 4.63, M = 3.98) or Israeli participants (M = 4.68, M = 3.91).

The association between attachment dimensions and volunteerism: Pearson correlations and hierarchical multiple regressions examining the contribution of attachment dimensions to the volunteerism variables replicated the findings of Study 1. Attachment scores made significant unique contributions to the volunteerism variables and explained between 6.3% and 27.4% of the variance in the Israeli sample, 4.7% and 20.8% in the Dutch sample, and 9.3% and 28.2% in the American sample. Because none of the interactions between anxiety and avoidance were significant in any of the samples, we focus here on the unique contributions of these variables.

In all three samples, avoidance was significantly associated with, and made a significant, unique negative contribution to, the number of volunteer activities, the time devoted to them, and the VFI Values and Understanding scores (see Table 2). The higher the avoidance score, the fewer activities participants volunteered for, the less time they devoted to these activities, and the weaker was their endorsement of altruistic, other-regarding values and understanding as reasons for volunteering. In the American sample, higher avoidance was also associated with weaker endorsement of career-related reasons for volunteering (see Table 2).

As can be seen in Table 2, attachment anxiety was significantly and positively associated with, and made a significant unique contribution to, self-serving reasons for volunteering. In all three samples, the higher the attachment anxiety, the stronger the endorsement of self-enhancement,

social, and self-protective reasons for volunteering (see Table 2). In the Dutch and Israeli samples, greater attachment anxiety was also associated with stronger endorsement of career-related reasons (see Table 2), which was not the case in Study 1. As in Study 1, across all three samples, anxiety was not significantly associated with, and did not make a significant unique contribution to, the number of volunteer activities or the time devoted to them.

Attachment dimensions, volunteerism, and interpersonal functioning. To examine the possibility that volunteer experiences might be particularly beneficial to individuals with insecure attachment styles, especially those who scored high on anxiety, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses examining the unique and interactive contributions of attachment anxiety, avoidance, and number of volunteer activities a participant reported having engaged during last year to the UCLA Loneliness score and the overall IIP score. These regression analyses were conducted separately for each of the three samples (American, Dutch, and Israeli). The unique contributions of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and number of volunteer activities were examined in the first step of the regressions (after centering these variables); the contributions of the 2-way interactions (products) of anxiety and avoidance, anxiety and volunteerism, and avoidance and volunteerism were examined in the second step; and the contribution of the 3-way interaction was examined in the third step. Table 3 displays the standardized regression coefficients (betas) from these regression analyses.3

In all three samples, the overall regression model significantly predicted the UCLA Loneliness score: $F(7, 98) = 8.79$, $p < 0.01$, for the American sample; $F(7, 132) = 7.29$, $p < 0.01$, for the Dutch sample; and $F(7, 92) = 9.27$, $p < 0.01$, for the Israeli sample, accounting for between

24.1% and 39.7% of the variance in loneliness. As can be seen in Table 3, the main effects for attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance were significant in all three samples. In line with previous studies (beginning with Hazan & Shaver, 1987), the greater the attachment anxiety or avoidance, the lonelier a person tended to be. The main effect of number of volunteer activities was significant in the American sample (see Table 3), with a higher number of volunteer activities being associated with lower levels of loneliness. This effect, while running weakly in the same direction in the Dutch and Israeli samples, was not statistically significant.

With regard to interaction effects, the regression analyses revealed a significant anxiety by volunteerism interaction in the American and Israeli samples, which added 8.4% and 7.6% to the explained variance (see Table 3). This interaction was not significant in the Dutch sample. No other interactions were significant. As can be seen in Table 3, the nature of the significant interaction was similar in the American and Israeli samples. First, attachment anxiety was significantly associated with higher loneliness scores only when participants reported having engaged in relatively few volunteer activities (1 SD below the volunteerism mean). However, when participants reported having engaged in a relatively high number of volunteer activities (1 SD above the mean), the association between attachment anxiety and loneliness, which had been documented in previous studies, was not significant. Second, the number of volunteer activities was significantly associated with lower loneliness scores only among highly anxious people (1 SD above the anxiety mean) and not when attachment anxiety was 1 SD below the mean.

Thus, at least in the American and Israeli samples, volunteerism significantly moderated the association between attachment anxiety and loneliness. In the Dutch sample, volunteerism did not contribute uniquely to

loneliness and did not significantly moderate the effects of the attachment variables.

With regard to the overall IIP score, the regression model significantly predicted interpersonal problems in all three samples: $F(7, 132) = 15.84$, $p < 0.01$, for the American sample; $F(7, 98) = 12.56$, $p < 0.01$, for the Dutch sample; and $F(7, 92) = 12.24$, $p < 0.01$ for the Israeli sample, explaining between 37.8% and 40.7% of the variance in interpersonal problems. As can be seen in Table 3, whereas the main effect of attachment anxiety was significant in all three samples, the main effect of attachment avoidance was significant in the American and Dutch samples but not in the Israeli sample. As expected, the higher the attachment anxiety or avoidance, the higher the overall level of interpersonal problems. The main effect of number of volunteer activities was also significant in all three samples: The higher the number of volunteer activities, the lower the overall IIP score.

The regression analyses also revealed a significant anxiety by volunteerism interaction in all three samples, which added between 6.6% and 11.8% to the explained variance (see Table 3). No other interactions were significant. As can be seen in Table 3, the source of the significant interaction was similar in the three samples and replicated the pattern of interaction observed for two of the samples in the analyses involving loneliness. First, attachment anxiety was significantly associated with higher IIP scores only when participants reported having engaged in few volunteer activities. When participants reported having engaged in a relatively high number of such activities, this association was not significant and approached zero. Second, level of volunteerism was significantly associated with lower IIP scores only among anxiously attached participants, and not among those with relatively low attachment anxiety. In other words, across the three samples, volunteerism diminished what we are interpreting as a

detrimental effect of attachment anxiety on interpersonal problems, and the beneficial effect of volunteering was most notable among anxiously attached people.4

Given the significant role that volunteerism seemed to play in moderating the association between attachment anxiety and interpersonal functioning, we wanted to examine more specifically whether reporting selfless, altruistic reasons for volunteering (the VFI Values score) also played an important role. If so, this would be **especially compelling evidence for the possibility that engaging in** non-egoistically motivated caregiving is negatively correlated with the interpersonal problems usually associated with an anxious attachment style. For this purpose, we conducted a series of 3-step hierarchical regression analyses examining the unique and interactive effects of attachment anxiety, attachment avoidance, and the endorsement of altruistic reasons for volunteering (VFI Values score) on the UCLA Loneliness score and the overall IIP score. These regression analyses were similar to the ones described above. In order to control statistically for individual differences in the endorsement of other reasons for volunteering, we computed a total score for each participant by averaging the remaining 25 VFI items and included this score as an additional predictor in the first step of the regressions. Table 4 presents the relevant standardized regression coefficients (betas) for these regression analyses.

Beyond the already reported main effects of attachment anxiety and avoidance, the regressions revealed a significant unique contribution of the VFI Values score to loneliness and overall IIP scores in the American and Israeli samples (see Table 4): The stronger the endorsement of altruistic reasons for volunteering (i.e., the higher the VFI Value score), the lower the reported levels of loneliness and interpersonal problems. In the Dutch sample, the VFI Value score did not have a significant effect on either

loneliness or interpersonal problems (see Table 4). The regression analyses revealed no significant interaction between attachment anxiety and volunteering for altruistic reasons. Thus, although there is evidence, at least in the American and Israeli samples, that volunteering for altruistic reasons might be beneficial in general, its benefits are not peculiar to individuals high in attachment anxiety.

We also conducted exploratory regression analyses examining the contribution of each of the other VFI scales to loneliness and interpersonal problems (while controlling for the remaining VFI scores), and found that the Understanding scale contributed uniquely to the prediction of both variables in both the American and the Israeli samples ($\beta$s ranging from -0.21 to -0.29, all $p$s $< 0.05$): The higher the VFI Understanding score, which we interpret as indicating exploration-oriented reasons for volunteering, the lower the levels of loneliness and interpersonal problems. In the Dutch sample, these effects were not significant ($\beta$s $< 0.09$). No other VFI scale contributed significantly to explaining loneliness or interpersonal problems in any of the samples, nor did any of the interactions between attachment dimensions and any of the VFI scores reach significance in any of the samples.5

***Conclusions***

The results of Study 2 replicated and extended those of Study 1. Across the three different countries, avoidant attachment was associated with less engagement in volunteer activities and lower endorsement of altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons for volunteering, and anxious attachment was associated with more self-centered reasons for volunteering. There was also a significant interaction between attachment anxiety and volunteering as factors affecting interpersonal functioning, which suggests that volunteering

might be one route to improved social functioning (although other interpretations of these correlational findings are possible as well). Finally, volunteering for altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons was associated with better interpersonal functioning, at least in the American and Israeli samples, but the benefits of volunteering for these two kinds of reasons were not moderated by scores on either attachment dimension. Thus, volunteering for reasons related to caregiving or exploration may be especially beneficial in reducing interpersonal problems, although other interpretations of these findings are also possible.

## General Discussion

We were interested in the possibility that attachment insecurities interfere with altruistic caregiving, operationalized as volunteering to help others. We also explored the possibilities (1) that different forms of attachment insecurity are associated with different motives for volunteering and (2) that volunteering (interpreted as caregiving) reduces insecure, especially highly anxious individuals' level of interpersonal problems (a reduction interpreted as a step toward increased security). In two questionnaire-based, correlational studies conducted in three countries – Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States – we measured attachment-related anxiety and avoidance, number of volunteer activities, time devoted to such activities, and the extent to which a person volunteered for either self-serving reasons or more altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons. In Study 2, we also administered a loneliness scale and a broad measure of interpersonal problems to determine whether participating in volunteer activities might alleviate self-perceived problems in interpersonal functioning.

Most of the observed associations between attachment dimensions and volunteerism were similar across the three countries and the two studies. Avoidant attachment was consistently associated with engaging in fewer volunteer activities, devoting less time to such activities, and being less motivated by desires to express altruistic values and to understand, learn, and explore oneself and the world. Attachment anxiety was not generally related to engaging (or not engaging) in volunteer activities (except for the Israeli sample in Study 1, a finding that did not replicate in Study 2), or to devoting more or less time to such activities, but it was associated with more self-soothing and self-enhancing reasons for volunteering, an indication of anxious individuals' previously well-documented sense of personal inadequacy and needs for affection and social validation. The higher the attachment anxiety score, the stronger the endorsement of self-enhancement, social-acceptance, and self-protection reasons for volunteering.

To the extent that secure individuals are defined in terms of low scores on the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions, the findings suggest that attachment security is generally associated with volunteering to help others for altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons. This conclusion meshes well with previous findings indicating that attachment security, measured categorically, is associated with empathy, humane values, willingness to care for others, and cognitive openness (see Gillath et al., in press; Mikulincer, 1997), and that experimental augmentation of people's sense of security increases the likelihood of empathy, compassion, and prosocial behavior.6 Future experimental research should be conducted to reduce the remaining ambiguity about the causal direction of some of the correlational findings reported here.

For example, Study 2 revealed a promising interaction between attachment anxiety and volunteerism in explaining participants' feelings of

loneliness and quality of interpersonal functioning. In line with previous findings, attachment anxiety was significantly associated with greater loneliness and more severe interpersonal problems in all three samples (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mickelson et al., 1997). But these associations were significant only when participants were relatively unengaged in volunteer activities. Frequent engagement in volunteer activities moderated the associations between attachment anxiety and loneliness and interpersonal problems. In addition, engaging in volunteer activities was significantly associated with less loneliness and fewer interpersonal problems only among relatively attachment-anxious people. This suggests that engaging in volunteer activities contributed to people's sense of wellbeing mainly when they suffered from doubts about being lovable, esteemed, and cared for. We realize, however, that other interpretations could be placed on these correlational findings. Perhaps anxious people who have fewer interpersonal problems for other reasons are the ones who are able to engage in more altruistic activities. Longitudinal and experimental studies are needed to determine the correct causal interpretation.

Avoidant attachment was also associated with greater loneliness in all three samples and with more severe interpersonal problems in the American and Dutch samples but not in the Israeli sample. However, these associations were not moderated by level of volunteering, perhaps suggesting that avoidant people do not benefit from volunteering in the same way that anxious people do. This might be the case because they volunteer for reasons other than meeting their social needs, or because they remain relatively unaffected by social interactions generally (a finding consistent with several experimental studies summarized by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003.)

We also considered the effects of motives or reasons for volunteering on interpersonal problems. In the American and Israeli samples, altruistic and exploration-oriented reasons for volunteering, which in previous studies have been associated with attachment security, were associated with lower scores on measures of loneliness and interpersonal problems. Taken together, these findings may suggest that encouraging altruistic and exploration-oriented motives for volunteering might improve a person's sense of social wellbeing. This conclusion must also remain tentative, however, because of the correlational nature of our findings. It is possible that people with few interpersonal problems more often volunteer for security-related reasons.

Although the findings were generally similar across the three countries we sampled, there were differences that may be worth pursuing in future studies. For example, American participants, compared to their Dutch counterparts, reported being involved in more volunteer activities and attached more importance to understanding and career promotion as reasons for volunteering. In addition, engagement in volunteer activities was associated with being less lonely in the American sample, but not significantly so in the Dutch and Israeli samples. In all three samples, however, volunteering was associated with lower scores on the Inventory of Interpersonal Problems, making the different pattern for loneliness seem special in some way.

At present, we have no compelling explanations for the occasional cross-national differences we obtained. Future studies might examine the possible rewards for volunteering in different societies. Perhaps in the United States there is more of a school-related or professional payoff for volunteering, which would fit with the American participants' higher score on the VFI Career motives scale. As for the higher American scores on the

Understanding scale, this may have something to do with the fact that many college students in the United States are living away from home for the first time and attending school with the goal of attaining greater self-understanding and a clearer sense of identity; the participants at the higher end of the age range in the Dutch and Israeli samples were older than the oldest participants in the American samples, and most of the Israeli participants had already completed compulsory military service. These possible explanations need to be followed up with appropriate measures.

We also did not examine possible differences between different kinds of volunteer activities. We did not create our list of activities with conceptual distinctions between them in mind. Instead, most of our work went into sampling a wide range of activities and assuring that they made sense for each of the countries under study. Moreover, we did not ask detailed questions about types of compensation our study participants might have received for different activities. We used the term "volunteer" or its equivalent in each country, implying that no formal financial compensation was involved, but we did not ask about things like course credit or social credit in student organizations, which might have played a role in some cases. This is another issue that could be examined in future studies.

On the whole, the results support our theoretical hypotheses. More attachment-anxious individuals are not less likely to volunteer to help others, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with the wish to fit in, be thanked and appreciated, and be either distracted from or relieved of their own problems. Study 2 suggested that these motives may sometimes be gratified, in that volunteering seemed to go along with less loneliness and fewer interpersonal problems among participants who scored higher on attachment anxiety. Avoidant individuals apparently have less motivation to help others, and even when they do provide assistance, they seem to do so

for reasons other than altruism or exploration. It remains unclear, in their case, why they volunteer at all, because they do not score higher than nonavoidant individuals on the self-centered motive scales used here.

Although we cannot be certain that our theoretically guided causal interpretations of our correlational findings are correct, we have already shown in experimental studies that contextual manipulation of the sense of attachment security, including by subliminal methods not subject to demand characteristics, leads to greater empathy, a shift in values toward altruism, and more willingness to help a distressed person (Mikulincer et al., 2001, 2003; Mikulincer, Shaver, & Gillath, 2004). We are currently exploring the effects of experimentally induced security augmentation on volunteering to help, so we will soon know whether or not our theoretically based causal interpretations of the results presented here are justified. If they are, they will suggest ways to encourage forms of volunteerism that will benefit both the volunteers and the people they help.

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## Footnotes

1. Across the two studies and three samples within each study, only 21 participants (3.1%) failed to mark any of the 26 volunteer activities – that is, either hadn't volunteered at all in the previous year or simply skipped that part of the questionnaire (4 participants from the American samples, 10 from the Dutch samples, and 7 from the Israeli samples). Excluding these participants from the statistical analyses did not notably change the results, so we left them in.
2. Results for the individual subscales are available from the authors on request.
3. Very similar findings were obtained when the average time devoted to volunteer activities or a composite score indicating a participant's total engagement in volunteer activities (computed by multiplying the number of activities engaged in by the average frequency rating across all of those activities) were entered into the hierarchical regressions. We therefore report only one set of analyses in the text.
4. Regressions examining interactions between attachment scores and either loneliness or interpersonal problems as predictors of the number of volunteer activities a person reported engaging in yielded no significant interactions.
5. Regression analyses examining the contribution of interactions between either attachment anxiety or avoidance and either loneliness or interpersonal problems to accounting for scores on the six VFI factors yielded no significant interactions.
6. See Mikulincer and Shaver (2001) and Mikulincer et al. (2001) for examples of such procedures used in experimental studies and Bakermans-Kranenburg, van IJzendoorn, and Juffer (2003) for a meta-analysis of security-enhancing clinical and educational techniques.

**Table 1**

***Pearson correlations and standardized regression coefficients (β) showing associations between attachment dimensions and volunteerism variables (study 1)***

| Measures | Attachment Anxiety | | | Attachment Avoidance | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** |
| Number of philanthropic activities | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.01 | 0.03 | 0.19* | -0.37** | -0.35** | -0.38** |
| *B* | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.20* | -0.37** | -0.31** | -0.38** |
| Time devoted to volunteer activities | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.02 | -0.08 | -0.01 | -0.36** | -0.32** | -0.36** |
| *B* | -0.05 | -0.05 | 0.05 | -0.32** | -0.24* | -0.36** |
| Other-Regarding Values | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.11 | 0.01 | 0.01 | -0.35** | -0.33** | -0.48** |
| *B* | -0.05 | 0.03 | 0.05 | -0.29** | -0.31** | -0.47** |
| Understanding | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.04 | 0.04 | -0.01 | -0.29** | -0.34** | -0.40** |
| *B* | -0.01 | 0.08 | 0.03 | -0.26** | -0.27** | -0.39** |
| Career | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.02 | 0.13 | 0.13 | 0.08 | -0.19 | -0.06 |
| *B* | 0.02 | 0.11 | 0.14 | 0.09 | -0.14 | -0.07 |
| Self-Enhancement | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.28** | 0.43** | 0.42** | -0.02 | -0.05 | -0.06 |
| *B* | 0.20* | 0.37** | 0.41** | -0.14 | -0.03 | -0.15 |
| Social | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.31** | 0.27** | 0.32** | 0.09 | 0.08 | 0.06 |
| *B* | 0.27** | 0.25* | 0.31** | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.01 |
| Self-Protection | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.33** | 0.37** | 0.34** | -0.14 | 0.11 | -0.01 |
| *B* | 0.31** | 0.32** | 0.35** | -0.15 | 0.07 | -.04 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; HOL = Holland; ISR= Israel

## Table 2

***Pearson correlations and standardized regression coefficients (β) showing associations between attachment dimensions and volunteerism variables (study 2)***

| Volunteerism measures | Attachment Anxiety | | | Attachment Avoidance | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** |
| Number of philanthropic activities | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.09 | -0.03 | -0.12 | -0.29** | -0.34** | -0.38** |
| *B* | 0.09 | -0.12 | -0.06 | -0.29** | -0.36** | -0.31** |
| Time devoted to volunteer activities | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.03 | -0.03 | -0.08 | -0.33** | -0.40** | -0.30** |
| *B* | 0.03 | -0.04 | -0.08 | -0.33** | -0.35** | -0.30** |
| Other-Regarding Values | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.12 | 0.04 | 0.05 | -0.34** | -0.42** | -0.48** |
| *B* | -0.13 | 0.12 | 0.11 | -0.34** | -0.45** | -0.51** |
| Understanding | | | | | | |
| *R* | -0.01 | 0.13 | 0.05 | -0.35** | -0.30** | -0.49** |
| *B* | -0.01 | 0.14 | 0.11 | -0.36** | -0.33** | -0.47** |
| Career | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.01 | 0.20* | 0.21* | -0.32** | 0.11 | -0.09 |
| *B* | 0.01 | 0.19* | 0.25* | -0.32** | 0.07 | -0.14 |
| Self-Enhancement | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.44** | 0.43** | 0.39** | -0.10 | -0.04 | -0.09 |
| *B* | 0.44** | 0.46** | 0.43** | -0.09 | -0.04 | -0.11 |
| Social | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.34** | 0.34** | 0.23* | -0.10 | -0.02 | -0.07 |
| *B* | 0.33** | 0.36** | 0.20* | -0.09 | -0.09 | -0.01 |
| Self-Protection | | | | | | |
| *R* | 0.42** | 0.43** | 0.36** | -0.15 | 0.01 | -0.12 |
| *B* | 0.41** | 0.45** | 0.37** | -0.14 | -0.08 | -0.07 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; HOL = Holland; ISR= Israel

## Table 3

***The unique and interactive contributions (R2, β) of attachment dimensions and volunteerism variables to loneliness and interpersonal problems***

| Effect | UCLA Loneliness | | | Overall IIP Score | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** |
| Step 1 – $R^2$ (%) | 31.9 | 22.8 | 28.7 | 33.9 | 26.7 | 27.2 |
| Attachment Anxiety | 0.27** | 0.27** | 0.24* | 0.34** | 0.34** | 0.33** |
| Attachment Avoidance | 0.33** | 0.35** | 0.26** | 0.27** | 0.25** | 0.11 |
| Number of Volunteer Activities | -0.27** | -0.05 | -0.13 | -0.35** | -0.32** | -0.32** |
| Step 2 – $R^2$ Increase (%) | 7.6 | 1.2 | 8.4 | 6.6 | 11.8 | 10.2 |
| Anxiety x Avoidance | 0.14 | 0.13 | 0.17 | 0.06 | 0.10 | 0.16 |
| Anxiety x Volunteerism | -0.24* | -0.04 | -0.38** | -0.25* | -0.32** | -0.30** |
| Avoidance x Volunteerism | -0.02 | 0.01 | 0.02 | 0.05 | 0.13 | -0.06 |
| Step 3 – $R^2$ Increase (%) | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 0.2 | 0.1 | 0.4 |
| 3-Way Interaction | -0.01 | 0.08 | 0.12 | 0.01 | 0.06 | -0.07 |
| *Effects of Anxiety for:* | | | | | | |
| -1 SD on Volunteerism | 0.44** | 0.24* | 0.38** | 0.49** | 0.38** | 0.34** |
| +1 SD on Volunteerism | 0.04 | 0.32** | 0.08 | 0.07 | 0.02 | 0.01 |
| *Effects of Volunteerism for:* | | | | | | |
| -1 SD on Attachment Anxiety | -0.06 | -0.13 | -0.05 | -0.11 | -0.02 | -0.11 |
| +1 SD on Attachment Anxiety | -0.48** | -0.14 | -0.39** | -0.44** | -0.37** | -0.39** |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; HOL = Holland; ISR = Israel

## Table 4

***The unique and interactive contributions (R2, β) of attachment dimensions and altruistic reasons for volunteering (VFI Values score) to loneliness and interpersonal problems***

| Effect | UCLA Loneliness | | | Overall IIP score | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** |
| Step 1 – $R^2$ (%) | 25.1 | 25.8 | 19.9 | 27.3 | 29.4 | 26.4 |
| Attachment Anxiety | 0.23* | 0.32** | 0.20* | 0.30** | 0.36** | 0.35** |
| Attachment Avoidance | 0.28** | 0.35** | 0.27* | 0.25** | 0.39** | 0.08 |
| Altruistic Reasons for Volunteering | -0.29** | 0.02 | -0.19* | -0.28** | 0.04 | -0.31** |
| Step 2 – $R^2$ Increase (%) | 3.8 | 2.2 | 2.7 | 2.9 | 2.5 | 4.1 |
| Anxiety x Avoidance | 0.16 | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.17 | 0.12 | 0.20 |
| Anxiety x Altruistic Reasons | 0.01 | 0.09 | -0.08 | 0.01 | -0.01 | -0.10 |
| Avoidance x Altruistic Reasons | -0.12 | 0.03 | 0.06 | -0.04 | -0.02 | 0.11 |
| Step 2 – $R^2$ Increase (%) | 0.2 | 0.3 | 0.5 | 0.2 | 0.5 | 0.6 |
| 3-Way Interaction | -0.05 | 0.08 | 0.13 | -0.05 | 0.09 | -0.12 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; HOL = Holland; ISR = Israel
VFI, Volunteer Functions Inventory.

## Appendix

***The 26-item volunteerism scale and percentage of participants in each sample and country who indicated engaging in each volunteer activity during the past year***

| | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Item** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** | **USA** | **HOL** | **ISR** |
| 1. Community services (e.g., roadside cleanups, beach cleaning, planting trees or flowers, etc.) | 48.2 | 17.4 | 43.9 | 53.2 | 15.7 | 40.1 |
| 2. Volunteer civil service (e.g., firefighting, police work, Red Cross) | 17.9 | 12.6 | 15.5 | 23.5 | 17.8 | 14.0 |
| 3. Working with the terminally ill (e.g., hospice, hospital visits) | 33.1 | 18.4 | 20.6 | 37.7 | 17.6 | 24.2 |
| 4. Helping disabled people | 45.2 | 36.3 | 44.7 | 46.6 | 40.1 | 41.3 |
| 5. Volunteering at a general hospital | 20.2 | 22.9 | 18.4 | 30.2 | 22.4 | 22.2 |
| 6. Volunteering at a counseling center, counseling "hotline," or psychiatric treatment facility | 10.7 | 14.8 | 16.5 | 12.6 | 15.6 | 16.1 |
| 7. Helping people who are less fortunate than yourself (e.g., at soup kitchens, battered women's shelters, Salvation Army centers) | 52.5 | 10.8 | 41.1 | 50.9 | 12.7 | 44.2 |
| 8. Volunteering in religious activities (e.g., religious youth groups, being a "Sunday School" teacher) | 41.1 | 27.2 | 32.2 | 38.1 | 21.6 | 35.5 |
| 9. Nonreligious youth groups (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts) | 19.6 | 33.2 | 29.1 | 21.7 | 26.7 | 29.2 |
| 10. Working with animals (e.g., Humane Society) | 16.4 | 17.7 | 14.6 | 14.5 | 18.9 | 16.7 |
| 11. Conventional political activities (e.g., campaigning, stuffing envelopes, answering phones) | 17.7 | 13.8 | 24.3 | 21.6 | 16.9 | 15.4 |
| 12. Political activism (e.g., attending demonstrations, hanging signs for demonstrations) | 18.9 | 15.8 | 24.3 | 18.8 | 13.8 | 24.2 |

***(continued)***

| Item | Study 1 | | | Study 2 | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | USA | HOL | ISR | USA | HOL | ISR |
| 13. Volunteering through sororities or fraternities | 15.9 | 22.5 | 24.3 | 17.1 | 22.8 | 23.1 |
| 14. Being active in student organizations or associations | 56.3 | 32.2 | 22.6 | 61.3 | 24.7 | 24.2 |
| 15. Tutoring (university/college/ high school/elementary students) | 54.7 | 25.2 | 37.8 | 50.9 | 25.0 | 45.1 |
| 16. Working with special-needs children (e.g., disabled, retarded, autistic, blind, orphans, new immigrants) | 26.5 | 40.7 | 30.3 | 33.9 | 38.6 | 28.4 |
| 17. Coaching, refereeing sports | 31.8 | 17.4 | 37.8 | 31.1 | 19.8 | 28.8 |
| 18. Mentoring programs (e.g., Big Brother, boys or girls clubs) | 11.4 | 20.3 | 34.3 | 16.1 | 28.4 | 38.2 |
| 19. Pro bono (volunteer) law, accounting, medical, or other professional work | 10.8 | 14.8 | 14.7 | 9.4 | 11.8 | 7.8 |
| 20. Participating in a research project without credit/being an unpaid research assistant | 27.8 | 24.2 | 54.4 | 33.1 | 26.4 | 56.6 |
| 21. Unpaid internships | 27.9 | 38.2 | 18.8 | 34.7 | 28.4 | 19.2 |
| 22. Participating in support groups to help others | 16.5 | 11.2 | 19.7 | 23.5 | 14.9 | 18.8 |
| 23. Helping elderly people (e.g., Meals on Wheels, nursing homes, household help) | 28.5 | 33.9 | 25.2 | 29.2 | 28.4 | 20.4 |
| 24. Helping with road safety (e.g., serving as a volunteer crossing guard) | 5.6 | 2.9 | 7.8 | 9.4 | 4.9 | 5.2 |
| 25. Volunteering as a provider of information and referral services (e.g., in a museum, at a library) | 3.2 | 3.2 | 5.8 | 7.5 | 7.8 | 5.2 |
| 26. Helping members of the armed services (e.g., writing letters, sending food or “care packages”) | 5.7 | 5.8 | 29.1 | 11.3 | 3.9 | 24.2 |

# Chapter 3

## Attachment, Personality, and Volunteering: Placing Volunteerism in an Attachment-Theoretical Framework

Erez, A., Mikulincer, M., van IJzendoorn, M.H., & Kroonenberg, P.M..(2008). Attachment, Personality, and Volunteering: Placing Volunteerism in an Attachment-Theoretical Framework. *Personality and individual difference,* 44, 64-74.

# Attachment, Personality, and Volunteering: Placing Volunteerism in an Attachment-Theoretical Framework


## Abstract

*Recent studies have emphasized the negative impact of attachment insecurities for prosocial behavior. We examined the unique contribution of attachment insecurities to volunteerism and motives for volunteering beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits and assessed the potential roles of motives for volunteering in mediating and moderating the links between attachment insecurities and volunteering. One-hundred fifty-nine Dutch undergraduates completed scales tapping attachment insecurities, engagement in volunteer activities, motives for volunteering, and high-order personality traits. Findings show that attachment insecurities made a unique contribution to volunteerism beyond the explanatory power of personality traits. In addition, self-focused motives for volunteering were found to moderate the link between anxious attachment and volunteering behavior. The discussion focused on the psychological mechanisms by which attachment insecurities affect volunteerism.*


## Introduction

During the last decade, there has been a renaissance of interest in the investigation of prosocial motives and behaviors (e.g., Batson, 1991; Clary, Snyder, Ridge, Copeland, Stukas, Haugen, 1998). Among these prosocial activities are altruistic volunteer activities, such as teaching reading to poor children, running errands for the homebound elderly, and regularly donating blood. In recent theoretical writings, Mikulincer and Shaver (2003, 2007)

have emphasized the relevance of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982. 1973) for the study of prosocial behavior, and Gillath, Shaver, Mikulincer, Nitzberg, Erez, & van IJzendoorn (2005) found that insecure patterns of attachment counter altruistic motives for volunteering and actual engagement in philanthropic activities. The purpose of our study is to attempt to replicate these findings in a new sample while dealing with two unaddressed issues: (a) the unique explanatory power of attachment patterns beyond the potential contribution of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism) to volunteerism, and (b) the interplay between attachment patterns, motives for volunteerism, and volunteering behavior.

According to attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982), human beings are born with an innate psychobiological system (the attachment behavioral system) that motivates them to seek proximity, comfort, and support from protective others in times of need. Bowlby (1973) also proposed that the parameters of the attachment behavioral system are gradually shaped and altered by social experiences with protective others, resulting eventually in fairly stable individual differences in attachment style – a systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors that results from a particular attachment history (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Research, beginning with Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall (1978) and continuing through personality and social psychology studies (reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), indicates that attachment styles can be measured along two orthogonal dimensions, attachment-related anxiety and avoidance (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). A person's position on the attachment anxiety dimension indicates the degree to which he or she worries that a partner will not be available and supportive in times of need and strives to maximize proximity and dependence to relationship partners. A person's position on the attachment avoidance dimension indicates the extent to

which he or she distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain independence and self-reliance. People who score low on these two dimensions are said to have a secure attachment style.

Variations along the dimensions of attachment avoidance and anxiety reflect both a person's sense of attachment security and the ways in which he or she deals with distress (e.g., Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). People who score low on these dimensions hold internalized representations of comforting relationship partners, which create a continuing sense of attachment security, positive self-regard, and reliance on constructive strategies of affect regulation. Those who score high on either attachment avoidance or attachment anxiety possess internalized representations of frustrating attachment figures. These insecure individuals rely on what Mikulincer and Shaver (2003) called secondary attachment strategies, which involve either deactivating or hyperactivating the attachment system in an attempt to cope with insecurities and anxieties. Whereas high scores on attachment avoidance indicate reliance on deactivating strategies (inhibition of proximity seeking and instead trying to handle stressors alone), high scores on attachment anxiety reflect hyperactivating strategies – energetic attempts to attain greater proximity, support, and love combined with a lack of confidence that it will be provided.

According to attachment theory and research (Bowlby, 1969/1982; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007; Shaver & Hazan, 1988), the functioning of the attachment system is extremely important for understanding individual differences in prosocial behaviors. Theoretically, because of the urgent need to protect oneself from imminent threats, activation of the attachment system interferes with many non-attachment activities, including caregiving and any behavior intended to improve others' welfare. Under stressful conditions, adults generally turn to others for support rather than thinking first about

providing assistance and comfort to others. Only when they feel reasonably secure themselves can people invest time and energy to deal with others' needs and suffering.

Following this reasoning, Mikulincer and Shaver (2003, 2007) concluded that securely attached people would be more likely than relatively insecure people to empathize with and provide care for others. In addition, different psychological mechanisms would underlie the responses of attachment-anxious and attachment-avoidant people to others' suffering. In a number of studies, Batson (1991) has shown that lack of empathy or compassion can be due either to lack of prosocial motivation or to the arousal of what he calls "personal distress," a form of self-focused discomfort that is not translated into effective helping. Mikulincer and Shaver (2003, 2007) reasoned that avoidant people would distance themselves from others' suffering, resulting in sharply decreased prosocial motivation. In contrast, attachment-anxious people can be easily distressed in a self-focused manner (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007, for an extensive review) and then can react to others' suffering with personal distress.

These theoretical ideas have received extensive support in correlational studies examining caregiving patterns within dating and married couples (e.g., Collins & Feeney, 2000; Feeney & Hohaus, 2001; Kunce & Shaver, 1994) as well as experimental studies examining compassion and helping towards needy strangers in laboratory settings (e.g., Mikulincer, Gillath, et al., 2001; Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, & Nitzberg, 2005). Overall, findings indicate that attachment avoidance interferes with sensitive and responsive caregiving responses and attachment anxiety is associated with personal distress and ineffective patterns of caregiving.

Gillath et al. (2005) recently assessed attachment-style differences in engagement in voluntary altruistic activities. This study was conducted at

three different locations (Israel; Netherlands, US) and participants were asked to complete a scale tapping the number of volunteer philanthropic activities they volunteered for and the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998), measuring the extent to which they volunteered for either selfish, egoistic reasons (self-protection, career promotion, social approval) or more altruistic reasons (other-focused values). The results were highly similar in all three countries. Avoidant attachment was consistently associated with engaging in fewer volunteer activities and being involved for less altruistic reasons. Attachment anxiety was not directly related to engaging in volunteer activities, but it was associated with more egoistic reasons for volunteering.

Although Gillath et al.'s (2005) study supported the link between attachment and volunteering behavior, it did not address two important issues that leave the findings open to alternative interpretations. First, the observed link between attachment avoidance and inhibited volunteering can still reflect the underlying action of third-factor variables, such as high-order personality traits of extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness, rather than unique effects of attachment dimensions. Previous studies have shown that attachment insecurities are associated with lower levels of extraversion and agreeableness and higher levels of neuroticism (e.g., Carver, 1997; Noftle & Shaver, 2006; Shaver & Brennan, 1992) and that variations in these traits are related to prosocial behavior and volunteerism (e.g., Carlo, Okun, Knight, & de Guzman, 2005; Graziano & Eisenberg 1997; McCrae & Costa, 1999). Unfortunately, Gillath et al. (2005) did not assess high-order personality traits and then could not empirically examine the extent to which their findings are unique for attachment dimensions or are a mere reflection of these traits. This is the first goal of the current study.

A second interpretational problem of Gillath et al's (2005) study deals with the interplay between attachment dimensions, motives for volunteering, and volunteering behaviors. Theoretically, lack of altruistic motives for volunteering should mediate the observed link between attachment avoidance and inhibited volunteering. Highly avoidant people hold negative models of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and then may not give any priority to improvement of others' welfare among their values and goals, which, in turn, would directly inhibit volunteering behavior. In addition, motives for volunteering can moderate the possible effects of attachment anxiety on volunteering behavior. Although attachment anxiety was not associated with this kind of behavior, it is still possible that attachment-anxious people, who constantly search for others' approval and love, would be particularly prone to engage in volunteering activities when these self-focused benefits (e.g., self-protection, social admiration) underlie their reasons for volunteering. Unfortunately, Gillath et al. (2005) did not examine whether motives can mediate or moderate the effects of attachment dimensions on volunteering behaviors. This is the second goal of the current study

In order to deal with the two main goals of the study, we replicated Gillath et al.'s (2005) study in a new Dutch sample while adding a measurement of personality traits and conducting more sophisticated data analyses. Specifically, participants completed a battery of self-report scales tapping attachment dimensions (Experience in Close Relationships, Brennan et al., 1998), high-order personality traits (NEO Five Factor Inventory, Costa & McCrae, 1992), engagement in volunteering activities (the Volunteering questionnaire, Gillath et al., 2005), and motives for volunteering (VFI, Clary et al., 1998).

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 159 Dutch undergraduates from Leiden University (84 women and 75 men, ranging in age from 19 to 33 years, Mdn = 22), who volunteered to participate in the study without any monetary reward. One hundred and forty two participants were single. Statistical analyses revealed no significant gender differences in any of the measured variables or any significant interactions involving gender.

### *Materials and procedure*

Participants received a battery of four questionnaires in Dutch. The questionnaire battery included scales assessing attachment dimensions, volunteerism, reasons for volunteering, and the big five personality traits. These Dutch versions of all the scales were found to be reliable and valid in previous studies (e.g., Claes, Vandereycken, & Vertommen, 2004; Gillath et al, 2005). Participants completed the battery in small groups of 5-15 participants. The order of the questionnaires was randomized across participants.

Attachment orientation was assessed with the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998), a 36-item self-report instrument tapping attachment anxiety and avoidance. Participants were asked to think about their close relationships, without focusing on a specific partner, and rate the extent to which each item accurately described their feelings in close relationships, using a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (7). Eighteen items tapped attachment anxiety (e.g., “I worry about being abandoned”) and 18 items tapped avoidance (e.g., “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down”). The reliability and validity of the ECR have been demonstrated in a wide variety of samples

(e.g., Brennan et al., 1998). In our samples, Cronbach alphas were acceptable for the 18 anxiety items (0.87) and the 18 avoidance items (0.90). Two scores were computed by averaging items on each subscale after appropriately reverse-scoring some of the items. The anxiety and avoidance scores were not significantly associated ($r(157) = 0.11$), supporting Brennan et al.'s (1998) claims about the orthogonality of these dimensions.

Volunteerism was assessed with the 26-item scale Volunteerism questionnaire (Gillath et al., 2005). Each item named a particular volunteer activity (e.g., teaching reading, counseling troubled people, providing health care to the sick), and participants indicated whether or not they had engaged in it during the past year, and if so, how much time they had devoted to it. The time assessments were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "once a year" (1) to "almost every day" (7). For each participant, we computed two total scores: (a) Number of Volunteer Activities – the number of activities a participant marked in the list, and (b) Time Devoted to Volunteer Activities – the averaged time assessments across all the activities a participant marked. Since these two scores were highly correlated, $r(157) = 0.69$, $p < 0.01$, we computed a total volunteerism score by averaging the two scores (after being transformed into Z scores). Similar findings were revealed when analyses were conducted separately on each of the two volunteerism scores.1

To assess motives for volunteering, participants completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998), which consists of 30 items tapping six motives for volunteering (5 items per motive). One scale taps altruistic reasons: Values – expressing values related to altruistic and humanitarian concern for others (e.g., "I feel compassion toward people in need") Another scale taps exploration-related reasons for volunteering and is called Understanding (e.g., "Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands-on experience"). The other scales assess more self-serving

motives: Career – enhancing one's own career opportunities (e.g., "I can make new contacts that might help my business or career"); Self-Enhancement (e.g., "Volunteering makes me feel important"); Social (e.g., "People I'm close to want me to volunteer"); and Self-Protection (e.g., "Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles").

Participants were asked to think about their volunteer activities and then to read each VFI item and rate how important this reason for volunteering generally was to them. Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all an important/accurate reason" (1) to "a very important/accurate reason" (7). Previous studies (e.g., Clary et al., 1998) have shown that the VFI is reliable and have corroborated its six-factor structure. In our sample, Cronbach alphas for the VFI scales were high, ranging from 0.84 to 0.90. We therefore computed six scores for each participant by averaging items on each of the six motive scales.

Participants also completed the NEO Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI, Costa & McCrae, 1992). which consists of 60 items tapping neuroticism, extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (12 items per trait). Participants rated the self-descriptiveness of each item on a 5-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (5). In our sample, Cronbach alphas for the big five traits scales were adequately high, ranging from 0.81 to 0.88. We therefore computed five scores for each participant by averaging items on each of the big five traits scales.

## Results

### *Preliminary Analyses*

Pearson correlations replicated previous findings concerning associations between attachment dimensions and the big five traits. Attachment anxiety was significantly associated with higher neuroticism,

r(157) = 0.49, $p$ <0.01, and lower conscientiousness, r(157) = -0.25, $p$ <0.01. Avoidance was significantly associated with lower extraversion, r(157) = -0.22, $p$ <0.01, lower agreeableness, r(157) = -0.42, $p$ <0.01, and lower conscientiousness, r(157) = -0.23, $p$ <0.01.

The Unique Contribution of Attachment Orientations to Volunteerism

To determine the unique contributions of attachment dimensions to the volunteerism variables, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. The volunteerism score and the six VFI scores were the dependent variables. In the first step of each regression, we entered attachment anxiety and avoidance as predictors. In the second step, we added the big five traits scores as other predictors (see Table 1 for Pearson correlations between volunteerism variables and the big five traits). In this way, we compared whether the significant contributions of attachment orientations to volunteerism variables observed in Step 1 still remained significant after controlling for the big five traits (see Table 2).

Findings from the first step of the regressions replicated Gillath et al.'s (2005) findings. Avoidance was significantly associated with lower participation in volunteer activities, and weaker endorsement of altruistic values and understanding as reasons for volunteering. Attachment anxiety was significantly associated with higher endorsement of self-enhancement, self-protection, social-approval, and career-promotion reasons.

The introduction of the big five traits in the second step did not notably change the contributions of attachment orientations. That is after controlling for the big five traits, avoidance still made a significant contribution to participation in volunteer activities and endorsement of altruistic and exploration-related reasons (see Table 2). Similarly, attachment anxiety also still made a significant unique contribution to VFI scores denoting self-centered reasons (see Table 2). The regressions also revealed

significant contributions for the big five traits. Higher neuroticism was associated with higher endorsement of understanding, self-protection, self-enhancement, social-approval, and career-promotion reasons for volunteering. Higher extraversion was associated with higher endorsement of understanding, social-approval, and career-promotion reasons (see Table 2). Additional regressions in which the big five traits were introduced as predictors in the first step and attachment dimensions were added in the second step revealed that the inclusion of attachment dimensions significantly increased the explained variance of most of the volunteerism variables (with the exception of career- promotion and social-approval reasons), R2 Changes from .07 to .26, all ps < .05.

***Testing the mediation hypothesis of the link between Avoidance and Volunteerism***

In this section, we tested the hypothesis that more avoidant participants are less engaged in volunteer activities because they are less likely to endorse altruistic reasons for volunteering. In Baron and Kenny's (1986) terms, a variable functions as a mediator if (a) variations in the independent variable accounts for variations in the dependent variable (path a), (b) variations in the independent variable accounts for variations in the mediator (path b), (c) variations in the mediator significantly account for variations in the dependent variable (path c), and (d) when paths b and c are controlled, path a is no longer significant. In our data, the three first criteria for mediation were fulfilled: "path a" going from avoidance to volunteerism was significant, r(157) = -0.36, $p$ <0.01; "path b" going from avoidance to the Value VFI score was also significant, r(157) = -0.47, $p$ <0.01; and "path c" going from the Value VFI score to volunteerism was also significant, r(157) = 0.31, $p$ <0.01. Importantly, the associations between the other VFI

scores and the volunteerism score were not significant, rs ranging from 0.07 to 0.15.

On this basis, we examined whether the fourth criterion for mediation was also fulfilled by conducting a multiple regression with attachment avoidance and the Value VFI score as simultaneous predictors of volunteerism. Findings indicated that the significant unique contribution of avoidance to volunteerism was still significant after controlling for the Value VFI score, $\beta$ = -0.27, $p < 0.01$ (the Value score also made a significant unique contribution to volunteerism, $\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$.) In addition, Sobel's (1982) test for mediation revealed that the difference in the contributions of avoidance to volunteerism before and after the control for the Value VFI score was not significant, Z = 1.06. That is, avoidance had a direct effect on volunteerism without the mediation of altruistic motives.

***Testing the moderation hypothesis of the link between Anxiety and Volunteerism***

In this section, we tested the hypothesis that attachment anxiety contributes to volunteerism in interaction with the endorsement of self-centered reasons for volunteering (self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, career promotion). We examined this hypothesis by carrying out a series of hierarchical regressions separately for each of the six VFI scores. In the first step, attachment anxiety and one of the six VFI scores were entered as predictors (after centering these variables) of the volunteerism score. In the second step, we added the interaction between anxiety and the relevant VFI score (the product term) as another predictor.

For the value, understanding, and social VFI scores, interactions with attachment anxiety were not significant. However, attachment anxiety significantly interacted with self-protection, $\beta$ = 0.20, $p < 0.05$, self-

enhancement, $\beta = 0.18$, $p < 0.05$, and career, $\beta = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$, VFI scores. Simple slope tests (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that higher attachment anxiety was significantly associated with higher participation in volunteer activities when the endorsement of self-protection, self-enhancement, or career-promotion reasons was 1 SD above the mean, βs of 0.27, 0.25, and 0.25, respectively, all *p*s < 0.05, but not when the endorsement of these self-centered reasons was 1 SD below the mean, $\beta$s < -0.13. In addition, higher endorsement of self-protection, self-enhancement, and career-promotion reasons was associated with higher participation in volunteer activities when attachment anxiety was relatively high (1 SD above the mean), βs of 0.26, 0.23, and 0.20, all *p*s < 0.05, but not when anxiety was 1 SD below the mean, $\beta$s < -0.12. That is, highly attachment-anxious participants were more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts when they endorsed self-centered motives.

The introduction of the interaction between avoidance and each of the VFI scores as an additional predictor of volunteerism did not notably change the already reported effects for attachment anxiety. More important, avoidance had a significant main effect on volunteerism but did not significantly interact with any of the VFI scores, all $\beta$s < 0.10.

## Discussion

This study follows Gillath et al.'s (2005) findings regarding the contribution of attachment to volunteerism. Our findings replicated those of Gillath et al. (2005): Avoidant attachment was associated with engaging in fewer volunteer activities and being less motivated by altruistic reasons. Attachment anxiety was not associated with volunteerism, but it was

associated with the endorsement of more self-focused reasons for volunteering. The current findings also reveal that attachment orientations made a significant unique contribution to volunteerism beyond the contribution of high-order personality traits. Although these traits were associated with both attachment orientations and volunteerism, they failed to explain the link between attachment and volunteerism.

Did motives for volunteerism mediate the association between attachment avoidance and engagement in volunteering activities? Our findings revealed that, although avoidance was associated with low endorsement of other-focused reasons and these reasons were positively associated with volunteerism, the unique contribution of avoidance to volunteerism was still statistically significant after controlling for other-focused reasons. This finding implies that avoidance had a direct effect on engagement in philanthropic activities without the mediation of altruistic reasons. It is possible that the link between avoidance and inhibited volunteerism can be explained by avoidant people's heightened hostility toward others, disrespect of human nature, and appraisals of others as unworthy for help (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007, for a review). In addition, avoidant people may hold individualistic ideologies rather than collective-communal ideologies that inhibit volunteerism. In any case, future studies should examine these possible mediators.

Although previous research has found no significant correlation between anxious attachment and volunteerism (Gillath et al., 2005), our findings indicate that highly anxious people actually do volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, career promotion). Specifically, we found that attachment anxiety contributed to volunteerism in interaction with the endorsement of self-focused reasons for volunteering. Highly anxiously

attached people were more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts mainly when they endorsed self-focused reasons for volunteering. These findings imply that egoistic motives can actually encourage highly attachment-anxious people to volunteer.

To summarize, beyond replicating Gillath et al.'s (2005) findings, we have found that attachment dimensions make a unique contribution to volunteerism beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits. In addition, we found that highly attachment-anxious people did volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism were involved, whereas attachment avoidance had a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of endorsement of other-focused reasons for volunteering. Nevertheless, one should take with caution these conclusions due to the correlational, cross-sectional design of our study and the exclusive reliance on self-report measures. Further studies using interview-based measures and assessing actual volunteering are necessary for increasing our confidence on the validity and generalizability of the observed links between attachment and volunteerism.

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## Footnotes

1. We computed two additional volunteering scores for each participant: (a) engagement in asocial activities that require the volunteer to work alone, and (b) engagement in social activities that involve interpersonal interactions with other people. Statistical analyses performed on these two scores yielded highly similar findings to those reported in the results section.

**Table 1**

***Pearson correlations between volunteerism variables and big five traits***

| Volunteerism | Neuroticis | Extraversion | Openness | Conscientious | Agreeableness |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total score | -0.15 | 0.11 | -0.04 | 0.11 | 0.07 |
| VFI scores | | | | | |
| Values | 0.03 | 0.13 | 0.16* | 0.12 | 0.31** |
| Understanding | 0.19* | 0.24** | 0.14 | 0.06 | 0.17* |
| Self-protection | 0.36** | -0.15 | 0.06 | -0.14 | -0.10 |
| Self-enhancement | 0.25** | 0.01 | -0.03 | -0.04 | 0.11 |
| Social | 0.19* | 0.12 | -0.06 | -0.04 | -0.03 |
| Career | 0.17* | 0.22** | -0.02 | 0.03 | 0.01 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$, VFI, Volunteer Functions Inventory.

**Table 2**

***Standardized regression coefficients and percent of explained variance for regressions of volunteerism variables on attachment dimensions and big five traits***

| Effects | Volunteer activities | Values | Under-standing | Self-Protection | Self-Enhancement | Social | Career |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Step 1* | | | | | | | |
| Anxiety | 0.11 | 0.12 | 0.11 | 0.37** | 0.34** | 0.23** | 0.20* |
| Avoidance | -0.39** | -0.48** | -0.34** | 0.04 | -0.13 | 0.05 | -0.13 |
| R2 (%) | 14.4** | 22.1** | 11.1** | 14.6** | 12.1** | 5.9** | 4.7* |
| *Step 2* | | | | | | | |
| Anxiety | 0.19 | 0.13 | 0.05 | 0.26** | 0.30** | 0.19* | 0.18* |
| Avoidance | -0.41** | -0.42** | -0.32** | 0.01 | -0.06 | 0.07 | -0.12 |
| Neuroticism | -0.16 | 0.14 | 0.24* | 0.26** | 0.21* | 0.24* | 0.34** |
| Extraversion | 0.01 | 0.13 | 0.21* | 0.04 | 0.10 | 0.29** | 0.39** |
| Openness | -0.01 | 0.11 | 0.12 | -0.06 | -0.05 | -0.04 | 0.01 |
| Agreeable | -0.09 | 0.13 | 0.01 | -0.01 | 0.15 | 0.01 | -0.06 |
| Conscient | -0.01 | 0.07 | 0.03 | 0.01 | 0.06 | 0.03 | 0.06 |
| R2 change | 3.7 | 3.6 | 6.9* | 5.2* | 5.5* | 7.2* | 12.9** |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

# Chapter 4

## Morality and Volunteerism from Attachment Theory Perspective

Erez, A., Mikulincer, M., & van IJzendoorn, M. H. (submitted). Morality and Volunteerism from Attachment Theory Perspective.

# Morality and Volunteerism from Attachment Theory Perspective


## Abstract

*Research has emphasized the association between moral judgment and prosocial behavior. Recently new studies and theoretical writings have focused on the negative impact of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) on prosocial behavior such as volunteerism.*

*Our goal was to examine the hypothesis that moral judgment may interfere with the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism. The sample consisted of 139 Dutch undergraduates (74 women and 65 men, ranging in age from 19 to 33 years, M = 22 years). The findings show that avoidant individuals with low moral judgment report more egocentric reasons for volunteering (i.e., self-protection and self-enhancement reasons), while anxiously attached individuals show self centered reasons, regardless of their level of morality. The motivational mechanism by which attachment insecurities and morality affect volunteerism are discussed.*


## Introduction

Research has emphasized the relevance of moral judgment for prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et. al., 2005; Raviv, Bar-tal, & Lewis-Levin, 1980) and demonstrated its specific relation to volunteerism (Allen & Rushton, 1983). In recent theoretical writings, Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) have emphasized the relevance of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980) for the study of prosocial behavior, and Gillath, Shaver, Mikulincer, Nitzberg, Erez, and van IJzendoorn (2005) found that insecure patterns of attachment tend to counter altruistic motives for volunteering as

well as actual engagement in philanthropic activities. The purpose of the current study is to examine the possibility that moral judgment may serves as a mediator between attachment insecurities (anxiety and avoidance) to volunteering behavior. Specifically we are interested in the question of how insecure people would differ in their volunteerism activities and motivation for volunteerism in relation to their level of morality.

## Origins of Attachment theory

Attachment is the unique affective relationship that forms between infants and their primary caretakers (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969). Bowlbys' attachment theory (1969, 1973, 1979, 1980), focused mainly on the process through which infants and young children develop confidence in their caregivers' protection. According to Bowlby, human beings have a biologically based predisposition to a system of behaviors that promotes physical and psychological proximity to a primary caregiver. These behaviors include for example crying, following and looking at the person who serves as a primary caregiver, proximity seeking etc. (Brisch, 2002)

Following Bowlby's description of the universal aspect of attachment, an interest in individual differences in attachment emerged. On the basis of distinctive patterns of behaviors in the strange situation, Ainsworth (1978) developed her typology. She identified three basic patterns in infancy, called 'secure', 'avoidant', and 'resistant'/'ambivalent' (Ainsworth, 1978; Van IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). Mary Main, her student, found a fourth pattern, namely 'disorganized/disoriented' attachment.

Because of the primacy and depth of early attachment relationship between infant and caregiver, that bond is supposed by some students of attachment to serve as a prototype for later intimate relationships (Morris, 1982).

## Adult attachment style

Bowlby (1979) himself viewed attachment processes as affecting human beings "from cradle to the grave". But, in spite of intensive research, it was not until the 1980's that the application of attachment theory to adult-adult relationships was made. Hazan and Shaver (1987) observed Bowlby's ideas in the context of romantic relationships. They created a three-category measure of romantic attachment style; avoidant, anxious and secure – which were modeled on the three major patterns of infant-mother attachment described by Ainsworth et. al.(1978). Recently, researchers stated that it is more accurate to conceptualize and measure individual differences in attachment style dimensionally rather than categorically (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998; Fraley & Waller, 1998). Brennan's findings (1998) suggest that there may be two fundamental dimensions with respect to adult attachment patterns: attachment-related anxiety and attachment-related avoidance (Brenan, Clark and Shaver, 1998). People who score high on attachment-related anxiety tend to worry whether their partner is available, responsive, attentive, etc. People who score on the low end of this variable are more secure in the perceived responsiveness of their partners. People on the high end of attachment-related avoidance dimension prefer not to rely on others or open up to others. People on the low end of this dimension are more comfortable being intimate with others and are more secure depending upon and having others depend upon them. A prototypical secure adult is low on both of these dimensions (Fraley & Waller, 1998)

## Volunteerism

Volunteerism had been a subject of broad interest (Snyder & Clary, 2004). Penner (2002) defines volunteerism as long-term, planned, prosocial behavior, especially behavior intended to benefit strangers. Oliner (2002)

suggests that volunteerism can be defined as a non-spontaneous helping behavior for which one receives no material compensation. It can be parochial, meaning within one's own social group, or nonparochial. Nonparochial volunteerism is a form of altruism in that it is directed at others beyond the parochial group and is accompanied by no external reward.

Clary et al. (1998) describe three basic groups of motives for volunteering, including "self-serving motives" (self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, and career promotion), "altruistic motives" (genuine concern about other's welfare even when helping is more costly) and the last group which is conceptually related to what Bowlby (1969/1982) called the "exploration" system (learning new things about oneself and the world).

## Volunteerism and Attachment

Many studies have emphasized the relevance of attachment theory for understanding values that underlie reactions to others' needs. Several studies were based on attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Ainsworth, 1978), which has already proven to be an important part in the study of various forms of love and kindness (Cassidy & Shaver, 1999).

Theoretically, people who have the benefits of secure social attachments should find it easier to perceive and respond to other people's suffering, compared with those who have insecure attachments. This is because compassionate reactions are products of what has been called the caregiving behavioral system, the optimal functioning of which depends on its not being inhibited by attachment insecurity - the failure of the attachment behavioral system to attain its own goal, safety and security provided by a caring attachment figure.

Mikulincer at al. (2001) found that self-serving orientation was related to high scores on the attachment anxiety dimension. Empathy moves a person beyond selfish motives to the wish to meet the needs of another person. Mikulincer et al. (2001, 2003) found that this altruistic orientation was inversely related to the avoidance dimension. Gillath et al. (2005) conducted a study to determine whether the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to real-world altruistic volunteering. It was found that more attachment-anxious individuals are not less likely to volunteer to help others then secure individuals, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-enhancing motives. On the other hand, avoidant individuals apparently have less motivation to help others, and even when they do provide assistance, they seem to do so for reasons other than altruism or exploration.

Based on what has been established in the literature that volunteers score high on measures of moral development (Allen & Rushton, 1983) and the relevance of moral judgment to prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et. al., 1987, 1991; Raviv, Bar-tal, & Lewis-Levin, 1980), we would like to examine the possibility that moral judgment might moderate the relation between attachment insecurities (anxiety and avoidance) and volunteering behavior.

## Moral judgment

Rest (1987) defines moral judgment as the process by which a person arrives at a judgment of what is a moral action to undertake in a moral dilemma. According to Rest (1987), moral judgments reflect a person's underlying organization of thinking about matters of right and wrong. It is agreed that both reasoning and compassion are necessary in formulating moral actions; however, it is the relative importance of each component that

distinguishes various theories of moral action. Two of the main theories of moral development, Kohlberg's (1984) and Gilligan's (1982), describe stages through which people grow into the ability to make complex moral judgments. The theories differ in the emphasis on how people make judgments. While Gilligan's (1982) model is based mainly on empathic responses and sensitivity to others' needs, Kohlberg's (1984) theory focuses more on reasoning about principles of justice in a particular situation.

A neo-Kohlbergian approach was proposed by Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999). This theory of moral reasoning development is based on Kohlberg' s (1984) fundamental ideas of moral development, yet takes into account some of its criticisms. Rest and colleagues (1999) explain the development of moral reasoning as a change in which more primitive ways of thinking are gradually replaced by more complex ways of thinking. These forms of thinking that can be "primitive" or "more complex" are conceptualized as moral schemas (Rest et al., 1999). Moral schemas, or frameworks, that exist in long-term memory, are formed through a person's recognition of similarities and recurrences in his/her sociomoral experiences, much of which occurs through education. One of the key issues in neo-Kohlbergian moral development theory is the critical shift from rigid to flexible thinking; The ability to make a flexible shift from conventional thinking, in which one consults rules and norms for a solution, to post-conventional thinking, in which abstract principles are weighed and considered.

Rest et al. (1999) describe three qualitatively different moral schemas that form a developmental hierarchy: the "personal interest schema", the "maintaining norms schema", and the "postconventional schema". The "personal interest schema", considered as the most primitive schema, is presociocentric in that it lacks any concept of an organized society. This

schema relies on an egocentric and interpersonal perspective in which the person focuses on the personal stakes that the actor has in the dilemma and its consequences and also emphasizes concern for others with which the person has a close relationship. The "maintaining norms schema", usually developed in adolescence, is characterized by a need for a society-wide system of cooperation; the uniform application of laws and social norms; and a duty, authoritarian orientation. The "postconventional schema", which is the most complex of the three schemas, is characterized by the core belief that "moral obligations are to be based on shared ideals, which are reciprocal and are open to debate and tests of logical consistency, and on the experience of the community" (Rest et al., 1999, p. 307)

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## Attachment, morality and prosocial behavior

According to Kagan (1984), emotions are the basis for acquiring morality. Early maternal attunement described by Ainsworth (1969) and Stern (1985) is the basis for development of a personal identity, empathy for others and for development of a rule-based internal standard that becomes moral reasoning of right and wrong. Ainsworth et al. (1978) report that securely attached children are more likely to comply with family rules. Van IJzendoorn and Zwart-Woudstra (1995; Van IJzendoorn, 1997) suggested that autonomous attachment could be at the core of mature moral reasoning. Other studies emphasize the correlation between moral judgment and prosocial behavior Eisenberg et. al., 1987, 1991; Raviv, Bar-tal, & Lewis-Levin, 1980)

On the other hand, antisocial behavior is partially attributed to lack of a secure attachment bond in infancy, because of the resultant failure to develop a conscience (Magid and McKelvey, 1987). Tavecchio, Stams, Brugman, & Thomeer-Bouwens (1999) report that delinquent behaviour in

homeless youth appears to be caused by lack of stable social relationships, as well as by lack of moral internalization, with affect and cognition not being integrated.

To develop sensitivity to moral issues, children must understand rules and standards. Dunn (1987) described young children's increasing understanding of social rules and explanations for consequences. During the second year of life, children regularly explore, experiment with, and violate rules. It is the emotional responsiveness of the parent, and the mutual interaction between parent and child that enable children eventually to modify behavior and incorporate the standards (Kagan, 1981). Hoffman (1994) argues that the experience of empathic feelings is important in the development of moral understanding. Parental explanations to children about the cause of others' distress, especially if accompanied with a strong affective component, are effective in promoting their altruistic behavior.

Recently new studies and theoretical writings have focused on the negative impact of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) on prosocial behavior. Our goal was to examine the possibility that moral judgment contributes to the relation between attachment insecurities (avoidance and anxiety) and volunteerism.

Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, and Thoma (1999) describe development in moral judgment in terms of acquiring new schemas as solutions for creating a society wide system of cooperation. These schemas require the development of empathic concern, genuine interest in others and attunement to their needs. Our hypothesis is that insecure attachment individuals with low moral judgment will show lower levels of general interst in others and of volunteerism: In previous studies (Gillath et. al., 2005) a*nxious attachment individuals* were found to be involved in volunteering activities, mainly for self-focused reasons. In the current paper, we inquire the contribution of

morality to the relation between insecure attachment and volunteerism. Our assumption is that low moral judgment could be a moderator in this relation. We assume that insecure attachment (avoidant and anxious) individuals, with low morality level will show lower levels of volunteerism. In the case of avoidant individuals, the combination of their tendencies to withdraw from caring for others together with the reduction in their logical understanding of its moral importance, might lead to lower levels of volunteerism. As for anxious attached individual, low morality may counteract their self-centered motivation in volunteering, and by that contribute to low volunteering levels.

## Method

### *Participants*

The sample consisted of 139 Dutch undergraduates from Leiden University (74 women and 65 men, ranging in age from 19 to 33 years, $M$ = 22), who volunteered to participate in the study without any monetary reward. The participants were single. Statistical analyses revealed no significant gender differences in any of the measured variables or any significant interactions involving gender. Therefore, the results are presented without regard to gender.

### *Materials and procedure*

Participants received a battery of four questionnaires in Dutch. Considerable care was taken in translating and back translating the questionnaires from English to Dutch. The questionnaire battery included scales assessing attachment dimensions, volunteerism, reasons for volunteering, and moral judgment. Participants completed the battery in

small groups of 5-15 participants. The order of the questionnaires was randomized across participants.

***Attachment***:

Attachment orientation was assessed with the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998), a 36-item self-report instrument designed to measure attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Participants were asked to think about their close relationships, without focusing on a specific partner, and rate the extent to which each item accurately described their feelings in close relationships, using a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (7). Eighteen items tapped attachment anxiety (e.g., “I worry about being abandoned,” “I worry a lot about my relationships”) and 18 items tapped avoidance (e.g., “I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down,” “I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close”). The reliability and construct validity of the two subscales have been demonstrated in a wide variety of samples and in different languages (e.g., Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer & Florian, 2000). In our samples, Cronbach alphas were acceptable for the 18 anxiety items (0.87) and the 18 avoidance items (0.90). Two scores were computed by averaging items on each subscale after appropriately reverse-scoring some of the items. The anxiety and avoidance scores were moderately associated ($r(137) = 0.17$, $p < 0.05$).

***Volunteerism***

Volunteerism was assessed with the 26-item scale Volunteerism questionnaire (Gillath et al., 2005). Each item named a particular volunteer activity (e.g., teaching reading, counseling troubled people, providing health care to the sick), and participants were asked to indicate whether or not they

had engaged in it during the past year, and if so, how much time they had devoted to it. The time assessments were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "once a year" (1) to "almost every day" (7). For each participant, we computed two total scores: (a) Number of Volunteer Activities – the number of activities a participant marked in the list, and (b) Time Devoted to Volunteer Activities – the averaged time assessments across all the activities a participant marked. Since these two scores were highly correlated, $r(137) = 0.75$, $p < .01$, we computed a total volunteerism score by averaging the two scores (after being transformed into Z scores). Similar findings were revealed when statistical analyses were conducted separately on each of the two volunteerism scores.

To assess motives for volunteering, participants completed the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998), which consists of 30 items tapping six major motives or reasons for volunteering (5 items per motive). One scale taps altruistic reasons: *Values* – expressing values related to altruistic and humanitarian concern for others (e.g., "I feel compassion toward people in need," "I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving"). Another scale taps exploration-related reasons for volunteering (e.g., gaining new learning experiences and exercising one's skills and abilities) and is called *Understanding*. Sample items include: "Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands-on experience" and "Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things." The other four scales assess what we consider to be more self-soothing or self-serving motives for volunteering: *Career* – enhancing one's own career opportunities (e.g., "I can make new contacts that might help my business or career," "Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work"); *Self-Enhancement* (which Clary et al., 1998, called "Enhancement") – enhancing one's own self-esteem (e.g.,

"Volunteering makes me feel important," "Volunteering makes me feel better about myself"); *Social* – conforming to social norms and fitting in with friends (e.g., "People I'm close to want me to volunteer"); and *Self-Protection* (which Clary et al., 1998, called "Protective") – escaping from negative feelings (e.g., "Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles").

Participants were asked to think about all of their volunteer activities, if they engaged in more than one, and then to read each VFI item and rate how important this reason for volunteering generally was to them. Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all an important/accurate reason" (1) to "a very important/accurate reason" (7). Previous studies (e.g., Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002; Clary et al., 1998) have shown that the VFI is reliable and have corroborated its six-factor structure. In our sample, Cronbach alphas for the six VFI scales were adequately high, ranging from 0.84 to 0.90. We therefore computed six scores for each participant by averaging items on each of the six motive scales. Higher scores indicate greater importance in accounting for a person's volunteer activity.

***Moral judgment***

To asses moral judgment participants also completed the Defining Issue Test (DIT1; Rest et al., 1999). It is a multiple choice, group-administered measure that builds upon the Moral Judgment Interview (Kohlberg, 1984) but is a recognition test with excellent psychometric characteristics (Rest, 1986; Rest & Narváez, 1994). The participants are presented with six dilemmas: (a) "Heinz and the drug" (whether Heinz ought to steal a drug for his wife who is dying of cancer, after Heinz has attempted to get the drug in other ways); (b) "escaped prisoner " (whether a neighbor ought to report an escaped prisoner who has led an exemplary life after

escaping from prison); (c) "newspaper" (whether a principal of a high school ought to stop publication of a student newspaper that has stirred complaints from the community for its political ideas); (d)"doctor" (whether a doctor should give medicine that may kill a terminal patient who is in pain and who request the medicine); (e)"Webster" (whether students should go to the Vietnam war). Each dilemma is followed by a list of 12 considerations in resolving the dilemma, each of which represents different type of moral thinking. The participant's task was to rate the response statements, and then rank the statements in terms of their importance.

Thoma, Narrvaez, et al. (1997) reported a new way of indexing DIT data. The N2 index had a superior performance on the seven validity criteria that have been used in testing the DIT , in comparison to the traditional P index, which has been used for over 25 years. In the current study we used the N2 score, and Cronbach's alpha for the N2 score was 0.87. As reported by Rest et al. (1997) computation of the new scores (N2) has become so labor intensive that hand scoring is no longer an option, and the forms were computer scanned and analyzed by the "Center for Study of Ethical Development", University of Minnesota.

## Results

Bivariate analyses with Pearson correlations were conducted between reasons for volunteerism, and attachment and moral judgment variables and hierarchical multiple regressions examining the contribution of attachment dimensions and moral judgment to volunteerism variables were conducted (see table 1).

As expected, Attachment Avoidance and Volunteerism were significantly associated; the lower the avoidance the higher the volunteerism. Attachment avoidance was also negatively associated with the altruistic

reasons for volunteerism, with other regarding values and understanding respectively), but not with egocentric reasons. In contrast, attachment anxiety was not associated with altruistic reasons, but positively associated with egocentric reasons for volunteerism, in particular with Self Protection, Self Enhancement, Social reasons, and Career reasons. More attachment avoidance went together with less altruistic reasons for volunteerism, whereas more attachment anxiety was associated with more egocentric reasons.

Moral judgment was associated positively with one of the altruistic reasons for Volunteerism; Understanding (the higher the Moral Judgment the higher the Understanding). Moral judgment was not associated with any of the attachment dimensions.

We conducted hierarchical regression analyses examining the contribution of Attachment Anxiety, Attachment Avoidance and Moral judgment to Voluntarism, Altruistic Reasons for Volunteerism (Other-Regarding Values and Understanding) and Egocentric Reasons for Volunteerism (Self Protection, Self Enhancement, Social, Career), while controlling for age and gender (see table 2).

The results show that both Attachment Anxiety and Attachment Avoidance contributed uniquely to the prediction of Volunteerism ($\beta$s = 0.18, -0.40 all $p$s < 0.05): The higher the attachment anxiety the higher the voluntarism, the lower the attachment avoidance the higher the volunteerism.

While Attachment Anxiety contributed significantly to the prediction of all Egocentric Reasons for Volunteerism; Self Protection, Self Enhancement, Social and, Career (in all $p$<0.01) it did not contribute significantly to the prediction of Altruistic Reasons for Volunteerism; Other-Regarding Values and Understanding. In contrast, Attachment avoidance contributed highly significantly to the prediction of Altruistic Reasons for

Volunteerism; Other-Regarding Values and Understanding (in both $p<0.01$, negative association), and it did not contribute significantly to the prediction of the Egocentric Reasons for Volunteerism. In addition, Moral judgment contributed uniquely to the prediction of Understanding, which is one of the Altruistic Reasons for Volunteerism ($p<0.01$). Higher levels of moral judgment were associated with more altruistic reasons for volunteerism.

Gender played a role in the prediction of both Altruistic Reasons for Volunteerism (Other-Regarding Values and Understanding and Egocentric Reasons for Volunteerism (Self Enhancement, Social and, Career) (all $p<0.05$). Women engaged in volunteerism for more Altruistic Reasons and for the Egocentric Reasons of Self Enhancement, Social, and Career.

The interaction between Attachment Anxiety x Moral Judgment was not significant, but the interaction Avoidance x Moral Judgment was found to have a contribution to the dependent variables Self Protection and Self Enhancement (Egocentric Reasons for Volunteerism). Morality moderated the relation between Attachment Avoidance and Self Protection and Self Enhancement.

Regressions examining the source of the significant interaction between avoidance and moral judgment for endorsement of self-protection reasons revealed the following patterns of associations: Attachment avoidance made a significant contribution to the endorsement of self-protection reasons for volunteering when moral judgment was relatively low (one standard deviation below the mean), $b = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$, but not when moral judgment was relatively high (one standard deviation above the mean), $b = -0.14$. That is, attachment avoidance was positively associated with endorsement of self-protection reasons for volunteering mainly when participants scored low on moral judgment.

Regressions examining the source of the significant interaction

between avoidance and moral judgment for endorsement of self-enhancement reasons revealed the following patterns of associations: Attachment avoidance made a significant positive contribution to the endorsement of self-enhancement reasons for volunteering when moral judgment was relatively low (one standard deviation below the mean), $b$ = 0.28, $p$ <0.05. However, attachment avoidance made a significant inverse contribution to the endorsement of self-enhancement reasons for volunteering when moral judgment was relatively high (one standard deviation above the mean), $b$ = -0.26, $p$ < 0.05. That is, for participants who scored relatively low on moral judgment, attachment avoidance was associated with the endorsement of more self- enhancement reasons for volunteering. However, for participants who scored relatively high on moral judgment, attachment avoidance was associated with the endorsement of less self- enhancement reasons.

## Discussion

Researchers highlight the relevance of moral judgment for prosocial behavior (Eisenberg et. al., 1987, 1991; Raviv, Bar-tal, & Lewis-Levin, 1980) and emphasize that volunteers score high on measures of moral judgment (Allen & Rushton, 1983). The current study examined the possibility that attachment insecurities (anxiety and avoidance), that were reported by Gillath et al. (1995) to inhibit volunteerism and altruistic motivation for volunteerism might be moderated by moral judgment. Taking into account the level of moral judgment, one can ask how two insecure people would differ if one has low moral judgment and the other has high moral judgment.

Our results show that morality influences the correlation between motivation for volunteerism and attachment avoidance but not with

attachment anxiety. Avoidant individuals with low moral judgment reveal more egocentric reasons for volunteering such as self-protection and self-enhancement reasons. Whereas anxious-attached individuals, regardless of their level of moral judgment, tend to hold more egoistic reasons for volunteering (as self-enhancement, social-acceptance, and self-protection). The findings imply that egoistic motives can actually encourage anxious attached individuals as well as avoidant attached people with low morality level to volunteer. It also supports previous findings that emphasize the personal inadequacy and needs for social validation and acceptance of anxious attached individuals (Gillath et. al., 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, in press). This knowledge might serve programs which aim to broaden and encourage volunteerism behaviors by proposing also specific egocentric reasons for volunteering of those who are encouraged by self-centered reasons.

Another important understanding relates to the finding that moral judgment contributes to the general prediction of exploration reasons for volunteerism. This motivation is conceptually related to a central issue in attachment theory, which Bowlby (1969/1982) called the "exploration" system, which emphasizes the importance of attachment security to the ability of inquiring and learning new things about oneself and the world. That is, from our findings it appears that highly moral people appear to explore more and better understand what others' needs are. This exploration ability and motivation for exploration, might serve as a one of the basis factors of the tight relation between morality and volunteerism.

Gender differences were also found. Women reported more altruistic, egocentric and exploration reasons for volunteering. This fits previous findings which show that women typically serve more as volunteers, providing care to the elderly, tutor youth and provide support following

disasters (Taniguchi, 2006).

To summarize, we were interested in the role of moral judgment in the relation between attachment insecurities and motivation for volunteerism. The findings suggest that lower levels of moral judgment in avoidant attached individuals are related to self centered reasons (self-protection and self- enhancement) while anxious attached individuals are showing self centered reasons regardless of their level of morality. Our conclusion should be taken with caution due to the reliance on self-report measures and the correlational design of our study. Further studies using interview-based measures and assessing actual volunteering are necessary for increasing our confidence in the validity and generalizability of the observed associations. The findings raise questions about other factors that might be involved in that relation, such as cognitive level, social values, and personality characteristics.

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**Table 1**

***Pearson correlations showing associations between age, gender, attachment dimensions, moral judgment and voluntarism measures.***

| | Volunteer activities | Values | Under-standing | Self-Protection | Self-Enhancement | Social | Career |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Age | -0.09 | 0.03 | -0.14 | -0.11 | -0.04 | -0.08 | -0.12 |
| Gender | -0.04 | 0.40** | 0.31** | -0.08 | -0.19* | -0.11 | 0.21** |
| Attachment Anxiety | 0.13 | 0.06 | 0.11 | 0.39** | 0.37** | 0.24** | 0.20** |
| Attachment Avoidance | -0.33** | -0.34** | -0.24** | 0.15 | 0.00 | 0.11 | -0.05 |
| Moral Judgment | 0.00 | 0.13 | 0.22** | -0.04 | 0.03 | -0.08 | 0.04 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; Gender: Female = 1, Male = -1; *N*=xxx.

**Table 2**

***The unique contributions (β) of age, gender, attachment dimensions and moral judgment to volunteerism, altruistic reasons for volunteerism and egocentric reasons for volunteerism (7 regression models, in 2 steps)***

| | Volunteer activities | Values | Under-standing | Self-Protection | Self-Enhancement | Social | Career |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Background variables* | | | | | | | |
| Age | -0.09 | 0.03 | -0.14 | -0.11 | -0.04 | -0.08 | -0.13 |
| Gender | -0.04 | -0.40** | -0.32** | -0.08 | -0.19** | -0.11 | -0.22** |
| *Substantive predictors* | | | | | | | |
| Attachment Anxiety | 0.18* | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.37** | 0.39** | 0.23** | 0.21** |
| Attachme Avoidance | -0.40** | -0.28** | -0.21** | 0.12 | -0.01 | 0.10 | -0.05 |
| Moral Judgment | 0.00 | 0.09 | 0.22** | -0.02 | 0.04 | -0.07 | 0.04 |
| *Interactions between predictors* | | | | | | | |
| Avoidance x Moral Judgment | -0.04 | -0.09 | -0.08 | -0.26** | -0.27** | -0.17 | -0.08 |
| Anxiety x Moral Judgment | 0.06 | 0.01 | 0.03 | 0.05 | 0.00 | 0.03 | -0.12 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

# Chapter 5

## Attachment Anxiety, Intra-Group (Dis)Respect, Actual Efforts and Group Donation

Erez, A., Sleebos, E., Mikulincer, M., van IJzendoorn, M.H., Ellemers, N., & Kroonenberg, P. M. (submitted). Attachment Anxiety, Intra-Group (Dis)Respect, Actual Efforts, and Group Donation

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## Abstract

*The current study examines attachment-style differences in responses to inductions of group respect and disrespect. Participants completed a scale assessing attachment anxiety and avoidance, performed group tasks, and received high, average, or low respect feedback from group members. Then we assessed commitment to this group, actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group, and money donation to the group. For highly attachment-anxious participants, high group respect heightened group commitment and effort expenditure on behalf of the group, whereas group disrespect led to lower group commitment but to more money donation to the group and higher effort expenditure. Less attachment-anxious participants were not significantly affected by group respect or disrespect. The implications of attachment theory for group dynamics were discussed.*


## Introduction

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980) to the field of group relationships (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003; Smith, Murphy, & Coats, 1999), while stressing the significance of examining group dynamics from both individual and group levels (Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). Rom and Mikulincer (2003) found that a person's attachment orientations (anxiety, avoidance) affect cognition, affect, and behavior during group interactions, and Smith et al. (1999) showed that variations along these attachment orientations underlie a person's identification with, and commitment to social groups. In the current

study, we applied attachment theory to understand individual differences in the way people react to indicators of group respect and disrespect. At the same time we examined the possible role that attachment orientations play in moderating effects of manipulations of group respect and disrespect on individual group commitment, actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group, and money donation to the group.

***Group Respect and Behavior on Behalf of the Group***

The most prominent approach to intragroup respect and group-oriented behavior is the group-value theory (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Tyler, Degoey, & Smith, 1996; Tyler & Lind, 1992). According to this theory, group interactions that lead people to feel respected as group members reinforce their commitment to the group and encourage them to spend effort on behalf of the group. Indeed, several studies have consistently documented these positive effects of group members' appraisals of group respect on their commitment to the group and actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group (Sleebos, Ellemers & de Gilder, 2006a, 2006b: Sleebos, Ellemers, & de Gilder, 2007).

Following the same reasoning, proponents of the group-value theory (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Smith & Tyler, 1997) has also predicted that lack of group respect (or group disrespect) undermines psychological and behavioral involvement with a group and thus should result in reduced expenditure of effort on group tasks. However, studies on social exclusion and marginal group membership (e.g., Jetten, Branscombe, & Spears, 2002; Noel, Wann, & Branscombe, 1995) suggest that lack of respect from other group members tends to motivate people to display behaviors that show their loyalty and worth to the group, thereby resulting in increased group commitment, heightened contribution to the achievement of group goals, and

enhanced expenditure of effort in group tasks. In support of this view, Sleebos et al. (2006a) found that experimentally-manipulated signals of high respect from other group members led participants to expend more efforts in group tasks than a control condition in which participants received signals of average group respect. Sleebos et al. (2006a) also found that group disrespect led to higher effort expenditure on behalf of the group. However, at the same time, they found that inductions of group disrespect had an opposite effect on group commitment and intentions to work with the group (more group disrespect, less willingness to work with a group). In fact, Sleebos et al.'s (2006a, 2006b) findings clearly indicated that, although disrespected individuals do not want to remain a member of the group that rejected them, they still expended more actual efforts on behalf of the group than people who received signals of average group respect.

Sleebos et al. (2006b) explained the observed effects of group disrespect in terms of the "carrot" and "stick" implications of group interactions. Beyond the social rewards that people can receive from group respect and acceptance (the carrot), the possibility of social sanctions and rejection implied by signals of disrespect by other group members (the stick) can also operate as a strong motivational force that leads people to expend actual efforts on behalf of the group. According to Sleebos et al. (2006b), the main motive underlying the heightened effort expenditure on behalf of the group of disrespected people is to re-assert their self-worth. In fact, there is consistent evidence that signals of group disrespect are associated with self-esteem damage and even physical pain (e.g., Smith et al., 1998, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2001). Therefore, although being less committed to the group and less motivated to remain a member of the rejecting group, disrespected group members become concerned with their self-worth and may enhance actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group as a means for repairing the

damaged self-esteem. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (2002) also suggested that when people experience the threat of becoming a marginal group member (e.g. when they are disrespected), their need for self-affirmation is exacerbated. Enhanced effort expenditure on behalf of a group can then help to re-affirm their self-identity in the eyes of other group members.

In the current study, we want to build on and expand this line of research by examining the effects of individual differences in reactions to signals of group respect and disrespect. Although group disrespect is an aversive experience for every group member, the extent to which self-esteem is damaged by group disrespect and the compensatory expenditure of efforts on behalf of a group might depend on a person's susceptibility to signals of rejection and the strength and stability of his or her sense of self-worth. In our view, these individual differences can be interpreted in terms of attachment theory and might depend on a person's attachment insecurities, especially those related to attachment anxiety. These insecurities make a person more susceptible to signals of rejection and undermine the strength and stability of his or her self-esteem (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2005, 2007), which could be highly relevant for explaining reactions to signs of group respect and disrespect.

### *Attachment Theory and Research*

One of the basic assumptions of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980) is that social interactions with significant others (called "attachment figures" in the theory) are internalized in the form of mental representations of self and relationship partners ("internal working models of self and others"). Such representations can have an impact on close relationships, self-esteem, emotion regulation, and mental health

throughout life (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). To summarize the theory briefly, interactions with relationship partners who are available and supportive in times of need foster the development of both a sense of attachment security ("felt security"; Sroufe & Waters, 1977) and generally positive internal working models of the self and others. In this way, they provide a solid foundation for an authentic sense of self-worth, optimistic and benevolent appraisals of others' intentions and behaviors, and good mental health (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007). When attachment figures are rejecting or unavailable in times of need, felt security is undermined, negative models of self and others are formed, and the likelihood of self-related doubts and emotional problems increases (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002).

When testing this theory in studies of adults, most researchers have focused on a person's attachment orientations – the systematic pattern of relational expectations, emotions, and behaviors that results from a particular attachment history (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Research, beginning with Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall (1978) and continuing through recent studies by social and personality psychologists (reviewed by Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007), indicates that attachment orientations can be measured in terms of two orthogonal dimensions, attachment-related *anxiety* and *avoidance* (Brennan, Clark, & Shaver, 1998). The first dimension, *attachment anxiety*, reflects the degree to which a person worries that a partner will not be available or adequately responsive in times of need. The second dimension, *avoidance*, reflects the extent to which he or she distrusts relationship partners' goodwill and strives to maintain autonomy and emotional distance from them. People who score low on both dimensions are said to be secure, or securely attached.

According to attachment theory, secure attachment includes positive representations of oneself as worthy and competent (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). During interactions with available, sensitive, and supportive attachment figures, people find it easy to perceive themselves as valuable, lovable, and special, thanks to being valued, loved, and regarded as special by caring attachment figures. Moreover, they learn to view themselves as active, strong, and competent because they can effectively mobilize an attachment figure's support and restore emotional equanimity thanks to the "secure base" (Bowlby, 1988) provided by this attachment figure. In contrast, lack of attachment figure's availability, sensitivity, and responsiveness contributes to disorders of the self, characterized by a lack of self-cohesion, doubts about one's coherence and continuity over time, and vulnerable or unstable self-esteem (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005, 2007). This is the condition of insecurely attached people, whose frustrating and disappointing interactions with unavailable or rejecting attachment figures raise doubts about the degree to which the self is esteemed and loved by others.

Although both anxious and avoidant people have difficulties in constructing an authentic, cohesive, and stable sense of self-worth, attachment theory and research (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) suggest that each of these attachment insecurities result in different self-configurations and disorders of the self. Avoidant people attempt to deal with self-doubts by suppressing such doubts while working to convince themselves and other people that they are strong and self-sufficient. In this way, avoidant people tend to maintain a defensive façade of self-worth and to dismiss any signal of interpersonal rejection or disrespect. Attachment-anxious people, in contrast, tend to intensify self-related doubts and to

become particularly susceptible and vulnerable to even minimal signs of rejection, disapproval, or criticism. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2003), attachment-anxious people, who hope to gain a relationship partner's love, esteem, and protection, seem to take some of the blame for others' lack of attention and care and to mentally ruminate about why they are so worthless that others don't want to provide the love and approval that they so strongly desire. This mental rumination, which heightens the cognitive accessibility of negative self-views and self-related doubts, together with their strong needs for love and acceptance (e.g., Cassidy & Kobak, 1988) might make attachment-anxious people particularly susceptible to signals of respect and disrespect from others and lead them to display pro-social behaviors as a means to be accepted and loved.

### *Attachment anxiety, Self-Esteem, and Self-Worth Contingencies*

There is extensive evidence linking attachment anxiety and negative self-views. Compared to secure persons, anxiously attached persons report lower self-esteem (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991, Mickelson, Kessler, & Shaver, 1997), hold more negative perceptions of self-competence and more negative expectations of self-efficacy (e.g., Brennan & Morris, 1997; Cooper, Shaver, & Collins, 1998), incidentally recall more negative traits, and exhibit greater discrepancies between actual-self and self-standards (Mikulincer, 1995).

Attachment researchers have also identified that attachment-anxious people tend to base their self-views on unstable sources of worth and that their sense of self-esteem is extremely dependent on others' acceptance and rejection. For example, there is correlational evidence that attachment-anxious people's self-worth is especially dependent on others' approval (Andersson & Perris, 2000; Park, Crocker, & Mickelson, 2004). In contrast,

less attachment-anxious individuals are more likely to base their self-worth on domains that do not require constant external validation, such as long-term family support. In line with their emphasis on self-reliance, avoidant individuals have been found to be less dependent on interpersonal sources of self-esteem (Park et al., 2004).

Attachment-anxious people's tendency to derive their self-worth from others' reactions has been further documented in Srivastava and Beer's (2005) naturalistic study of group interactions. In this study, participants took part in four weekly small-group meetings and, following each group session, rated their own likeability and the extent to which they liked each other person in the group. Findings revealed that participants who were more liked by others following a particular group session had more positive self-evaluations in a later session. However, this dependence on others' liking was mainly found among participants scoring high on attachment anxiety. For less attachment-anxious group members, overall self-evaluations were quite high and relatively unaffected by what other members of the group thought. These findings were conceptually replicated by Broemer and Blumle (2003) in laboratory experiments examining a person's reactions to positive and negative self-relevant feedback.

***The Current Study***

In the current study, we want to examine whether attachment-anxious people's tendency to derive self-worth from others' reactions is manifested in the ways they react to signs of group respect and disrespect. Specifically, participants completed a self-report scale tapping attachment anxiety and avoidance, after which they were assigned to a small group and asked to interact with three group members. They were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions according to the level of respect they received

from other group members: high, average, low. Following this experimental manipulation, participants reported on their commitment to the group and group-related worries (worries concerning acceptance and approval by other group members) – which Sleebos et al. (2006a, 2006b) refer to as *acceptance anxiety*. In addition, we assessed actual behaviors on behalf of the group in two different ways. First, we asked participants to decide about the amount of money they would donate to the group. Second, we measured actual, more mandory effort expenditure in a group task. In this way, we assessed how high and low respect inductions, as compared to the average respect condition, affect participants' group commitment, group-related worries, money donation to the group, and actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group, and examined whether attachment anxiety moderates these effects.

In applying attachment theory and research to explain the ways people react to inductions of group respect and disrespect, we assume that variations along the attachment anxiety dimension would determine the extent to which these inductions would affect group commitment and actual behavior on behalf of the group. Specifically, attachment-anxious people tend to base their sense of self-worth on others' love and acceptance, depend on continual validation from others, and display extreme susceptibility to others' positive and negative reactions. As a result, inductions of group respect can lead attachment-anxious people to feel appreciated and valued, can temporarily pacify their chronic self-doubts, and can then enhance group commitment, actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group, and money donation to the group. Group disrespect can remind attachment-anxious people of their self perceived worthlessness, strengthen self-relevant worries, and then can lead them to react in the way observed by Sleebos et al. (2006a, 2006b): reduced commitment to the rejecting group together with heightened effort

expenditure on behalf of the group and more money donation to the group. Less attachment-anxious participants would be less influenced by inductions of group respect and disrespect because they hold a more solid, stable, and autonomous sense of self-worth, relatively independently of how they are evaluated by others (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

In our view, highly avoidant people's commitment and actual behavior on behalf of the group would not be significantly affected by inductions of group respect or disrespect. These people dismiss others' feedback, do not derive their self-worth from others' approval, and tend to suppress distressing thoughts and repress painful emotions (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 1997). On this basis, we predicted that attachment anxiety but not avoidance would moderate the effects of group respect and disrespect on group commitment, group-related worries, and actual behavior in behalf of the group. Our predictions are:

(1) As compared to an average group respect condition, inductions of high group respect would lead to higher group commitment, more money donation to a group, and higher effort expenditure on behalf of the group among participants scoring high on attachment anxiety, but not among less anxious participants.

(2) As compared to an average group respect condition, inductions of low group respect would lead to higher levels of group-related worries and lower group commitment but more money donation to a group, and higher effort expenditure on behalf of the group among participants scoring high on attachment anxiety, but not among less anxious participants.

## Method

### *Participants*

One hundred ninety eight Dutch students from Leiden University (137 women and 61 men, ranging in age from 18 to 31, median = 21) participated in the experiment. The duration of the experiment was 50 minutes, for which they received €4.5. Participants were randomly assigned to three experimental conditions, with 66 participants in each condition.

### *Materials and Procedure*

Participants were invited to the laboratory to participate in a study on how people work in task-groups. Participants (eight students per session) were seated in separate cubicles, containing a computer with a monitor and a keyboard, and they were told that they could communicate with each other by means of the computer network. Computers were used to provide instructions and collect participants' responses.

After receiving general instructions, participants completed a Dutch version of the Experiences in Close Relationships scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998) in order to assess self-reports of attachment-related anxiety and avoidance. Participants were asked to think about their close relationships, without focusing on a specific partner, and to rate the extent to which each item accurately described their feelings in close relationships, using a 7-point scale ranging from "not at all" (1) to "very much" (7). Eighteen items tapped attachment anxiety (e.g., "I worry about being abandoned," "I worry a lot about my relationships") and 18 items tapped avoidance (e.g., "I prefer not to show a partner how I feel deep down," "I get uncomfortable when a romantic partner wants to be very close"). The reliability and construct validity of the two subscales have been demonstrated in a wide variety of samples and in different languages (e.g., Brennan et al., 1998; Mikulincer &

Florian, 2000). In our sample, Cronbach alphas were acceptable for the 18 anxiety items (0.85) and the 18 avoidance items (0.90). Two scores were then computed by averaging items on each subscale, with higher scores reflecting higher attachment-related anxiety and avoidance respectively. These two scores were not significantly associated, $r(196) = 0.13$, supporting Brennan et al.'s (1998) claims about the orthogonality of anxiety and avoidance dimensions.

Following the ECR scale, participants were told a cover story, explaining that this was a study of team collaboration in financial organizations. A bogus personality test followed, which allegedly allowed the experimenter to assign the session-participants to two four-person teams according to their problem-solving style (Noel et al., 1995). In reality, all participants were told that they were holistic-focused problem solvers and they received pre-programmed information that simulated the alleged responses of other members of their team.

Next, each participant was asked to provide some personal information by typing brief descriptions on the computer, ostensibly for the purpose of getting to know each other better (Branscombe et al., 2002; Sleebos et al., 2006a). Specifically, participants were asked to recall and describe an experience of personal success in school or work settings that they were proud of and an experience of personal failure in the same settings that they were ashamed of. In a similar vein, they were asked to recall and describe an experience of successful team performance of which they were proud and an experience of unsuccessful team performance of which they were ashamed (Sleebos et al., 2006a; 2006b). Subsequently, participants were asked to rate the respect they felt toward each of the three fellow in-group members on a 9-point scale (1 = *little respect*, 9 = *great respect*), based on the experiential descriptions each of them had ostensibly provided.

Actually, all participants received standardized, preprogrammed descriptions, containing behavioral episodes that had been rated equally positive (e.g., “At work, somebody had a stroke and I applied first aid”) or equally negative (e.g., “I failed my driving license test three times in a row”) in a pilot study (Sleebos et al., 2006a). Participants were led to believe that each of the three fellow in-group members was evaluating them based on the experiential descriptions they provided.

Respect feedback from one's team members was manipulated by informing participants about the average respect scores they had supposedly received from the other three fellow in-group members. In the low respect condition, participants were informed that, on average, the other three in-group members had rated them lower (4.3) than the neutral point (6) and that their score was lower than the respect scores that the other three in-group members had received (which were stated to be 6, 5.3, and 6.7, respectively). In the average respect condition, participants were informed that, on average, the other three in-group members had rated them equal (6) to the neutral point (6) and that their respect score was quite similar to the respect scores the other three in-group members had received (which were stated to be 6, 5.3, and 6.7, respectively). In the high respect conditions, participants were informed that their average respect score was higher (7.7) than the neutral point (6) and higher than the respect scores that the other three in-group members had received (which were stated to be 6, 5.3, and 6.7, respectively).

Following this experimental manipulation, participants received a self-report questionnaire and they were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with each item. Ratings were given on a 9-point scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). To check the effectiveness of the experimental manipulation, participants received 3 items tapping the extent to which they thought that team members respected them (e.g., "to what extent do you

think your fellow group members respect you for your individual achievements?"). Cronbach's alpha for these items was high (0.95), allowing us to compute a total score of perceived group respect by averaging the 3 items.

The questionnaire also included items tapping group commitment and group-related attachment worries. *Group commitment* (Cronbach's alpha = 0.82) was measured with seven items, adapted from Ellemers et al.'s (1998) scale, focusing on the affective commitment participants felt toward their current team (e.g., "I feel at home among my fellow group members in my task-group." *Group-related worries* (Cronbach's alpha = 0.76) was assessed with 4 items, adapted from Smith et al.'s (1999) Social Group Attachment scale, tapping the extent to which participants currently felt that they were unworthy as a group member and experienced worries and concerns regarding acceptance by the other three in-group members (e.g., "I worry that my group does not really accept me"). We computed two total scores for each participant by averaging the relevant items in each subscale. Higher scores reflected higher group commitment and higher group-related worries.

After completing the questionnaire, participants were invited to work on a group task that served to assess participants' actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group. Participants were told that only their collective performance as a team would be scored (e.g., the average time that took for all the four team members to complete the task), and that no information would be provided about their individual performance. Then, they performed a *speed effort task*, which was presented as ''a simplified version of the work employees in financial organizations do,'' and participants were asked to enter four rounds of thirty numbers, each containing 3-digits at the highest possible *speed.* In this task, for each participant we computed the time they took to complete the task. The less time a participant took to complete the

task (higher performance speed), the greater the effort he or she spent on the task and the greater his or her contribution to team performance.

Upon completion of this task, we collected data on participants' willingness to contribute to their current group. Specifically, participants were given a few options for using a potential sum of money (10 Euros), which they might earn in a lottery between all participants. Participants received the following instructions: "If you win the money, would you (a) keep the money for yourself, (b) share the money with your own task-group, (c) donate the money to Unicef, (d) keep half of the money for yourself and share the other half with your own task-group, or (e) keep half of the money for yourself and donate the other half to Unicef." Participants were asked to decide what they want to do with the 10 Euros by choosing one of the five given options. On this basis, we computed for each participant a *group donation* score by assigning a score of 2 to participants who chose to share all the money with their group (option b), a score of 1 to participants who chose to share half of the money with their group (option d), and a score of 0 to participants who chose one of the remaining options[1]. Upon choosing an option, participants were told that the experiment had finished and they were paid and debriefed.

## Results

### *Manipulation check*

In order to examine whether the experimental manipulations were effective in producing feelings of respect/disrespect, we performed one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) examining the effects of respect induction (low, average, high) on the manipulation check measure. As expected, a significant main effect for respect manipulation was found on the manipulation check measure, $F(2, 195) = 374.66$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = 0.79$.

Scheffe post hoc tests ($\alpha = 0.05$) revealed that participants in the high respect condition were more likely to think they were more respected ($M = 5.65$, $SD = 0.70$) than participants in the average respect condition ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 0.55$), who, in turn, were more likely to believe in group members' respect than participants in the low respect condition ($M = 2.66$, $SD = 0.65$).

***Attachment Orientations and Responses to Group Respect and Disrespect***

In order to examine our predictions concerning the contribution of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) to a person's responses to inductions of group respect and disrespect, we conducted a series of hierarchical regressions for the study dependent variables (self-reports of group commitment and group-related worries, donation of money to the group, effort expenditure on behalf of the group). For these regressions, we computed two dummy variables: One contrasting high respect (1) to the average and low conditions (-1) and the other contrasting low respect (1) to the average and high conditions (-1). By introducing these two contrasts simultaneously into a regression model, we compared group respect and group disrespect to the average (control) respect condition. Then, at the first step of these regressions, we included the main effects of group respect, group disrespect, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance. Following Aiken and West's (1991) recommendation, attachment scores were centered in relation to their mean. In the second step, we examined the two way interactions between each of the two manipulated variables (group respect, group disrespect) and each attachment dimension (a total of 4 interactive terms).

For self-reports of group commitment, the regression revealed significant unique effects for respect induction and attachment anxiety (see Betas in Table 1). As expected, participants in the high respect condition

reported higher commitment to their group than participants in the moderate respect condition. In addition, the higher a participants' attachment anxiety, the lower the reports of group commitment. The main effect for disrespect induction approximated statistical significance. In line with Sleebos et al.'s (2006a, 2006b) findings, participants in the low respect condition reported lower group commitment than participants in the moderate respect condition (see Table 1). However, these effects were qualified by significant interactions for respect induction × attachment anxiety and disrespect induction × attachment anxiety (see Table 1).

Simple Slope Analyses (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that the inverse association between attachment anxiety and group commitment was significant in the disrespect condition, $b$ = -0.45, $p < 0.01$, but not in the moderate and high respect conditions, $b$s of -0.04 and -0.07. That is, the receipt of moderate or high respect feedback seemed to buffer the negative impact that attachment anxiety had on group commitment. In addition, when attachment anxiety was relatively high (+1 *SD*), the respect induction (high versus moderate respect conditions) produced a significant increase in group commitment, $b$ = 0.36, $p < 0.01$, whereas the disrespect induction (low versus moderate respect conditions) produced a significant decrease in group commitment, $b$ = -0.35, $p < 0.01$. These effects of respect and disrespect inductions were not significant when attachment anxiety was relatively low (-1 *SD*), $b$s of 0.02 and 0.07. In line with our predictions, attachment anxiety intensified the effects that inductions of group respect and disrespect had on reports of group commitment.

The regression performed on group-related worries revealed significant unique effects for disrespect induction and attachment anxiety (see Table 1). Participants in the low respect condition reported higher group-related worries than participants in the moderate respect condition. In

addition, the higher a participants' attachment anxiety, the higher the reports of group-related worries. Interestingly, the regression also revealed a significant interaction between disrespect induction and attachment avoidance (see Table 2). Simple Slope Analyses revealed that when attachment avoidance was relatively low (-1 *SD*), the disrespect induction (low versus moderate respect conditions) produced a significant increase in group-related worries, $b = .48$, $p < 0.01$. This effect of disrespect induction was not significant when attachment avoidance was relatively high (+1 *SD*), $b = 0.15$. That is, attachment avoidance seemed to buffer the increase in group-related worries that the disrespect induction produced.

For effort expenditure in the speed task, the regression revealed a significant unique effect for attachment anxiety (see Table 2): The higher a participants' attachment anxiety, the faster the completion of the task (higher effort expenditure). However, this effect was moderated by two significant interactions: respect induction x attachment anxiety and disrespect induction x attachment anxiety (see Table 2). For the respect x attachment anxiety interaction, Simple Slope analyses revealed that the inverse association between attachment anxiety and the time that it took to complete the task was significant in the high respect condition, $b = -0.38$, $p < 0.01$, but not in the moderate respect condition, $b = -0.02$. For the disrespect x attachment anxiety interaction, Simple Slope analyses also revealed that the inverse association between attachment anxiety and the time that it took to complete the task was significant in the low respect condition, $b = -0.45$, $p < 0.01$, but not in the moderate respect condition, $b = 0.05$. Again, fitting our predictions, as compared to relatively low anxious participants, more attachment-anxious participants reacted with higher effort expenditure on behalf of the group (faster completion of the task) to the receipt of either high or low respect feedback.

Additional Simple Slope effects revealed that when attachment anxiety was relatively low (-1 *SD*), both respect and disrespect inductions produced a significant increase in the time it took for a participant to complete the task, *b*s of 0.21 and 0.28, *p*s < 0.05. However, when attachment anxiety was relatively high (+1 *SD*), both respect and disrespect inductions led to faster completion of the task, *b*s of -0.17 and -0.22, *p*s < 0.05. As predicted, respect and disrespect inductions increased effort expenditure (faster task completion) among participants who scored relatively high on attachment anxiety. However, these inductions reduced effort expenditure (longer time to complete the task) among participants who were relatively low in attachment anxiety.

The regression performed on money donation to the group revealed a significant unique effect for attachment anxiety (see Table 2): The higher a participants' attachment anxiety, the higher the amount of money donated to the group. However, this effect was moderated by a significant interaction between disrespect induction and attachment anxiety (see Table 2). Simple Slope Analyses revealed that the positive association between attachment anxiety and money donation to the group was significant in the low respect condition, $b = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$, but not in the moderate respect condition, $b = -0.08$. In addition, when attachment anxiety was relatively high (+1 *SD*), the disrespect induction (low versus moderate respect conditions) produced a significant increase in money donation to the group, $b = 0.29$, $p < 0.01$. This effect of disrespect induction was not significant when attachment anxiety was relatively low (-1 *SD*), $b = -0.17$. Fitting our prediction, an induction of group disrespect increased donation of money to a group mainly among highly attachment-anxious participants. All the other effects, including those comparing high versus moderate respect conditions, were not significant.

## Discussion

The main goal of the current study was to apply attachment theory to the study of small group dynamics and to provide a better understanding of individual differences in the ways people react to signals of respect and disrespect from other group members. Previous studies have found that attachment theory is a relevant framework for exploring individual differences in the context of group interactions (e.g., Rom & Mikulincer, 2003; Smith et al., 1999). In our study, we used this framework as a prism for inquiring about the effects of perceived group respect on group commitment and pro-group behavior. Overall, the findings clearly indicate that variations along the attachment anxiety dimension are relevant for explaining individual differences in group commitment and expenditure of actual effort on behalf of the group following inductions of group respect and disrespect.

Our findings indicated that highly attachment-anxious participants were more strongly affected by both poles of respect (i.e., high respect and disrespect) than less anxious participants. Specifically, highly attachment-anxious participants, as compared to less anxious participants, reacted to the induction of high group respect with higher reports of group commitment and more effort expenditure on behalf of the group. These findings emphasize attachment-anxious people's hyper-sensitivity to signs of social approval and their over-dependence on external sources of self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005, 2007). When feeling accepted and loved by their group, attachment-anxious participants strengthen their commitment to the group and displayed more actual behavior on behalf of the group. This suggest that they might feel so grateful to the group for its approval and acceptance that they spend a lot of effort on behalf of the group. However, although such inductions of high group respect can increase highly

attachment- anxious people's group commitment and actual behavior on behalf of the group, one should note that these pro-group responses are driven by strong motives of social approval and strong self-relevant doubts, and thus can disappear as the time elapsed from the high group respect feedback and no further positive feedback is given. In this case, anxious people's chronic self-related doubts might return and interfere with pro-group responses.

The reactions of attachment-anxious participants to the induction of group disrespect were in line with Sleebos et al.'s (2006a, 2006b) findings. As expected, highly attachment-anxious participants, as compared to less anxious participants, reacted to the induction of group disrespect with stronger worries about acceptance and approval from other group members and lower group commitment. Moreover, although being less committed to the rejecting group, they reacted to the induction of group disrespect with more money donation to the group and higher actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group. That is, attachment-anxious participants made a lot of real, concrete effort on behalf of the group after being disrespected and even after reporting low commitment to the group.

It seems that attachment-anxious group members who perceive themselves as disrespected react with strong worries about being accepted and approved by other group members and serious doubts about their commitment to the group. However, their strong need for others' love and self-related worries impel them to increase their contribution to the group (more money donation) and to invest more actual efforts on behalf of the group probably as a means for repairing their damaged sense of self worth. It seems that attachment-anxious people continue to invest in the rejecting group to feel better about themselves. According to Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio and Piliavin (1995), these affective reactions can lead to helping

and pro-social behavior primarily because the person believe that helping will make him or her feel better by eliminating the negative mood or producing some rewarding outcomes.

These effects of group respect and disrespect inductions were not significant among less anxious participants. These participants showed no significant changes in group commitment or group-related worries following the receipt of high, moderate, or low group respect feedback. Moreover, they showed no increase in money donation to the group or effort expenditure on behalf of the group following inductions of high group respect or group disrespect. In fact, they were less likely to invest in the group following inductions of either respect or disrespect. That is, less attachment-anxious people (i.e., more secure) seemed to be less influenced by group respect feedbacks. Moreover, they are so secure in their autonomous sense of self-worth that they feel that don't need to work hard for a group following a high respect induction or can detach from a group following a disrespect induction.

According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2005, 2007), individuals scoring low on attachment anxiety are likely to base their self-worth on domains that do not require constant external validation and therefore are less affected significantly by signals of group respect or disrespect. More secure individuals can mobilize caring qualities within themselves – qualities modeled on those of their attachment figures – as well as representations of being loved and valued by such figures, and these representations act as authentic and highly stable sources of comfort and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), and then can buffer the cognitive, emotional, and motivational impact of signals of group respect or disrespect.

With regard to attachment avoidance, findings revealed that this attachment dimension was not significantly associated with reports of group

commitment and actual behaviors on behalf of the group and did not moderate the effects of inductions of group respect or disrespect. Attachment avoidance was only found to weaken the effects of induced group disrespect on group-related worries. Specifically, whereas participants scoring relatively low on attachment avoidance reacted to group disrespect with heightened worries about being accepted and valued by their group, those scoring relatively high on avoidance showed no significant increase in group-related worries following the induction of group disrespect. That is, attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect.

This finding fits well with the already observed defensive tendency of highly avoidant people to maintain a façade of self-worth and to dismiss any signal of interpersonal rejection (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, 2007, for a review). That is, avoidance seems to be an effective strategy to protect the self from others' evaluation. However, one should note that we have assessed explicit manifestations of group-related worries, which can be easily affected by avoidant defenses. Perhaps the assessment of more implicit manifestations of these worries would still reveal the negative emotional and cognitive impact that group disrespect might have even among highly avoidant people. In addition, it is also possible that the distress caused by our induction of group disrespect was not so strong, thereby allowing avoidant people to easily dismiss the worries it can cause. Probably, more personally relevant instances of group disrespect can shatter avoidance people's defensive façade of self-worth and elicit heightened group-related worries.

Beyond the observed effects of attachment orientations, one should note that the current findings can lead to further specification and elaboration of group value theory (e.g., Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler & Blader, 2000). Individual differences in attachment anxiety might serve as an important

moderator of the processes advanced by the group value model. Without taking into account individual variations along the attachment anxiety dimension, the induction of high group respect only led to the predicted increase in group commitment, but no increased effort expenditure in a subsequent group task was visible. Likewise, findings concerning the induction of group disrespect can lead to further specification of the group-value theory. We observed that only highly attachment-anxious people reacted according to predictions derived from the group-value theory: Although they were less committed to the group following being disrespected than following receiving signals of high respect to the group, they showed heightened actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group following inductions of either group respect or disrespect.

Before ending this discussion, we want to note some limitations of the current study. Following inductions of group respect or disrespect, we assessed participants' effort expenditure on behalf of the group. However, we did not give participants the opportunity to work "for themselves" or on behalf of another, alternative group. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether the current findings indicate variations in effort expenditure on behalf of a specific group or non-specific investment in task performance. Further research should examine effects of group respect and disrespect on task performance that is irrelevant to the accepting/rejecting group. It is also important to note that our explanation of attachment-anxious people's reactions to inductions of group respect and disrespect involves variations in self-esteem. For example, we suggested that attachment-anxious people work for a rejecting group to increase their damaged self-esteem, even if they dislike this group. However, we did not assess situational self-esteem and then could not examine the mediating role of changes in self-esteem during the experimental session. Further research should systematically

assess variations in participants' self-esteem following inductions of group respect and disrespect and examine whether these variations are related to investment in the group and whether they can explain the observed effects of attachment anxiety.

In addition, previous research on group respect has mainly focused on discretionary forms of efforts, as these efforts were argued to be more influenced by respect (e.g., Tyler & Blader, 2002). In the current study, we assessed performance on a speed task, a more mandatory form of effort (participant had to fulfill the task) that can be less affected by inductions of group respect or disrespect (however, Sleebos et al, 2006b, Study 1, found significant effects of group respect on a speed task). Therefore, it is not surprising that we did not find a main effect for respect inductions on the speed task, and that these inductions affected task performance only under particular circumstances (when people scored high on attachment anxiety). Further research should attempt to replicate our findings while using a less mandatory form of effort expenditure.

Our research has emphasized the importance of attachment theory for exploring *individual differences* in the context of group behavior. We showed that feelings of belongingness to the group and engagement in group serving efforts following signals of group respect and disrespect are highly dependent on a person's attachment insecurities along the attachment anxiety dimension. Further research should attempt to explore these effects in real-life groups and examine whether more personally relevant feedback concerning group respect and disrespect can override the observed individual differences and lead even more securely attached people to succumb to the pressure exerted by group feedback. Further research should also examine the conditions which might either lead highly attachment-anxious people to

take distance from a rejecting group or make them try to be accepted and valued by such a group.

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## Footnotes

1. We also computed for each participant a UNICEF donation score by assigning a score of 2 to participants who chose to donate all the money to UNICEF, a score of 1 to participants who chose to donate half of the money to UNICEF, and a score of 0 to participants who chose one of the remaining options. Statistical analyses revealed no significant unique and interactive effect of respect inductions, attachment anxiety, and attachment avoidance on the UNICEF donation score

**Table 1**

***Standardized regression coefficients and significance tests of the prediction of self-report measures according to attachment scores and respect manipulations***

| Effects | Group Commitment | Group-Related Worries |
|---|---|---|
| *Step 1* | | |
| Attachment anxiety | **-0.24**** | **0.35**** |
| Group Respect | **0.19*** | -0.01 |
| Group Disrespect | -0.14 | **0.32**** |
| Attachment avoidance | -0.03 | -0.06 |
| *Step 2* | | |
| Anxiety x disrespect | **-0.22*** | -0.06 |
| Anxiety x respect | 0.17* | -0.08 |
| Avoidance x disrespect | 0.14 | **-0.17*** |
| Avoidance x respect | -0.02 | 0.07 |
| $F$ (8, 197) | 8.26** | 8.95** |
| $R^2$ (%) | 25.8 | 27.4 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

## Table 2

***Standardized regression coefficients for group donation and effort expenditure and persistence in group tasks according to attachment scores and respect manipulations***

| Effects | Money Donation to the Group | Effort Expenditure and Persistence (Speed Task) |
|---|---|---|
| *Step 1* | | |
| Attachment anxiety | **0.15*** | **-0.20*** |
| Group Respect | 0.06 | 0.02 |
| Group Disrespect | 0.06 | 0.03 |
| Attachment avoidance | -0.04 | 0.03 |
| *Step 2* | | |
| Anxiety x disrespect | **0.23*** | **-0.25*** |
| Avoidance x respect | 0.14 | 0.01 |
| Avoidance x disrespect | 0.12 | -0.00 |
| Anxiety x respect | -0.09 | **-0.19*** |
| $F$ (8, 197) | 3.35* | 2.43* |
| $R^2$ (%) | 12.4 | 9.3 |

Notes: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

# Chapter 6

## Taking Stock: Attachment and Prosocial Behaviors

## Taking Stock: Attachment and Prosocial Behaviors

This thesis aimed to examine the relevance of attachment insecurities (avoidance, anxiety) in explaining prosocial behavior.

Our opening studies revealed that across three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States) the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to prosocial behavior, as measured by real-world altruistic volunteering. *Avoidant individuals* engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons than secure individuals to care for others. *Anxious individuals* are not less likely to volunteer, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives (self-protection, self-enhancement, social and career motives). It appears that those self-centered motives play an important role in mediating the links between attachment anxiety and volunteering behavior, whereas attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. *Attachment security*, as defined in terms of low scores on the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions, is generally associated with higher prosocial altruistic behavior and caring for people for other-focused reasons.

The importance of attachment security is enhanced by the findings of its unique contribution to prosocial behavior, beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism). Although these traits were associated with both attachment orientations and volunteerism, they failed to explain the link between attachment and volunteerism.

Taking into consideration the issue of moral judgment, illuminates the importance of the egocentric motives for volunteering of avoidant

individuals; The findings show that while anxiously attached individuals show self centered reasons, regardless of their level of morality, avoidant individuals report more egocentric reasons for volunteering (i.e., self-protection and self-enhancement reasons) when their level of moral judgment is low.

Finally, our research has emphasized the importance of attachment theory for exploring individual differences, also in the context of group behavior. We showed that feelings of commitment as well as engagement in group serving efforts and donation to the group following signals of group respect and disrespect are highly dependent on a person's attachment insecurities along the attachment anxiety dimension; for highly attachment-anxious participants, high group respect heightened group commitment and effort expenditure on behalf of the group, whereas group disrespect led to lower group commitment but to more money donation to the group and higher effort expenditure. Less attachment-anxious participants were not significantly affected by group respect or disrespect. Attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. The findings stress the importance of individual self representation from which a person perceives others and reacts to them.

## Attachment, caring and prosocial behavior

The purpose of the present thesis was to conceptualize prosocial, caring behavior in term of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theories (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982, 1973, 1980).

Recent studies have mainly focused on the possibility that there are certain measurable motives or reasons for benefiting the other person (e.g., Penner, 2002). But to date, there have been relatively few attempts to link

caring behavior to broad psychological theories of personality, motivation, and social behavior. And even fewer experimental studies have been conducted to test those links (Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath, Nitzberg, 2005).

From the viewpoint of attachment theory, the “caregiving behavioral system" was described by Bowlby (1969/1982) as an innate system that act in response to the needs of dependent others and serves as a complementary system to the “attachment behavioral system”, which governs people’s, especially young children’s, emotional attachments to their caregivers. The aim of the caregiving system is more likely to become notable when a person is secure enough to allow for an empathic focus on someone else’s needs.

Mikulincer and others (e.g., Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nitzberg, 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005; Feeney & Collins, 2001) have argued that only a relatively secure person can easily perceive others not only as sources of security and support, but also as suffering human beings who have important needs and therefore deserve support. This capacity to help others is a result of having witnessed and benefited from good care provided by one’s own attachment figures, which both increases one’s sense of security and provides models of good caregiving (Collins & Feeney, 2000; Kunce & Shaver, 1994). Furthermore, the sense of attachment security reduces needs for self-protection and self-enhancement (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005) and allows a person to shift resources to other behavioral systems, including caregiving, and to take the other’s perspective, which is the core mechanism underlying altruistic helping (Batson, 1991, 2002). In other words, attachment security facilitates helping behavior that is truly aimed at benefiting another person even when there is no egoistic reason for helping.

Theoretically, we expected attachment related insecurities to interfere with altruistic helping. We assumed that the altruistic, innate tendency to

attend empathically to others and provide care when needed can be interfered with, suppressed, or overridden by attachment insecurity (attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance). However, this does not mean, that anxious and avoidant people will react in the same way to another person's distress. Attachment anxious individuals tend to be concerned more with their own distress and need for greater attachment security (Collins & Read, 1994), which may focus their mental resources away from taking the perspective of another person, and perhaps show more egoistic motives for helping and engaging in altruistic behavior. People who score high on attachment avoidance tend to be uncomfortable with closeness and interdependence, tend to distance themselves from others, and be more cynical and disapproving in response to other people's signals of vulnerability, weakness, and need (Collins & Read, 1994). This disposition might well interfere with empathy and even decrease altruistic helping.

## Attachment insecurity, real-world caring & altruistic volunteering

In the second chapter, we report on two studies conducted in three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States) to determine whether the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to real-world caring and altruistic volunteering.

As expected, the findings reveal that avoidant individuals engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons than secure individuals to care for others. Anxious individuals are not less likely to volunteer, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives (self-protection, self-enhancement, social and career). These self-comforting or security-enhancing motives for volunteering might serve the need to feel included in a group, have higher self-esteem, and feel less troubled by interpersonal problems. These motives

may sometimes be gratified in that volunteering seemed to be associated with less loneliness and fewer interpersonal problems among participants who scored higher on attachment anxiety.

Secure individuals are defined in terms of low scores on the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions and the findings suggest that attachment security is generally associated with higher volunteerism to care for and help people for other-focused reasons. Mikulincer and Shaver (2005, in press) concluded that possessing greater attachment security may allow people to provide effective care for others. This sense of security is closely related to optimistic beliefs about distress management and feelings of self-efficacy when coping with one's own or a relationship partner's distress. As a result, securely attached people are more likely than relatively insecure people to empathize with and provide care for others.

Finally as there are only a few published studies suggesting cross-cultural differences in either caregiving behavior or links between caregiver sensitivity and attachment style (Rothbaum, Weisz, Pott, Miyake, & Morelli, 2000), it seems important to highlight the fact that the findings appeared to generalize across differences in societal and cultural norms (supporting the viewpoint of Van IJzendoorn and Sagi, 1999; 2001).

## Attachment, Personality, and Volunteering

The third chapter deals with the explanatory power of attachment style beyond the contribution of high-order personality traits (extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness) to volunteerism.

Previous studies have shown that attachment insecurities are associated with high order personality traits (lower levels of extraversion and agreeableness and higher levels of neuroticism, e.g., Shaver and Brennan, 1992) and high-order personality traits have been found to contribute to

volunteerism (e.g., Bekkers & De Graaf 2002). Our findings reveal that attachment dimensions make a unique contribution to volunteerism, beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits.

The results show that although these traits were associated with both attachment orientations and volunteerism, they failed to explain the link between attachment and volunteerism. After statistically controlling for high-order personality traits attachment avoidance still had a significant negative effect on participation in volunteer activities and on endorsement of altruistic, other-focused reasons for volunteering

Similarly, attachment anxiety also made a significant unique contribution to self-focused reasons for volunteering, indicating that high-order personality traits did not explain the contribution of attachment anxiety.

Beyond the unique contribution of attachment orientations, high-order traits made significant unique contributions to reasons for volunteerism. Whereas neuroticism was associated with higher endorsement of understanding, self-protection, self-enhancement, social-approval, and career-promotion reasons for volunteering, higher scores on extraversion were associated with more endorsement of social-approval and career-promotion reasons for volunteering. That is, extraversion contributed to more interpersonal motives for volunteering, perhaps due to the need of highly extraverted people for interpersonal interactions (McCrae & Costa, 1997). However, high-order personality traits did not make any significant contribution to engagement in volunteering activities and to the endorsement of other-focused, altruistic reasons for volunteering.

We also examined the role that motives for volunteering play in mediating or moderating the links between attachment insecurities and volunteering behavior. That is, we examined the interplay between

attachment dimensions, motives for volunteering, and volunteering behaviors. Theoretically, lack of altruistic motives for volunteering should mediate the observed link between attachment avoidance and relatively low engagement in volunteering activities. Highly avoidant people hold negative models of others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and therefore may not give any priority to the improvement of others' welfare among their values and goals, which, in turn, would directly inhibit any engagement in volunteering behavior. In addition, motives for volunteering can moderate the possible effects of attachment anxiety on volunteering behavior. Although attachment anxiety was not significantly associated with this kind of behavior, it is still possible that attachment-anxious people, who constantly seek other's approval and love, would be particularly prone to engage in volunteering activities where these activities offer some kind of self-focused benefits (e.g., social admiration).

We found that highly attachment-anxious people actually did volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism were involved (that is, highly anxiously attached participants are more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts mainly when they endorse self-centered reasons for doing so), whereas attachment avoidance had a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering.

## Attachment, morality and voluteerism

Our goal was to examine the possibility that the influence of attachment insecurities (anxiety and avoidance) on volunteerism (Gillath et. al, 2005) might be moderated by moral judgment. The findings reveal that for participants who scored relatively low on moral judgment, attachment avoidance was associated with the endorsement of more self- enhancement

reasons for volunteering. However, for participants who scored relatively high on moral judgment, attachment avoidance was associated with the endorsement of less self- enhancement reasons.

The relation between attachment anxiety and motivation for volunteerism was not affected by the level of morality. That is, morality influences the correlation between motivation for volunteerism and attachment avoidance but not with attachment anxiety.

The findings imply that egoistic motives can actually encourage anxious attached individuals as well as avoidant attached people with low morality level to volunteer. It also supports previous findings that emphasize the personal inadequacy and needs for social validation and acceptance of anxious attached individuals (Gillath et. al., 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, in press). In case of avoidant individuals functioning on a high level of moral reasoning their moral judgment seems to overrule the influence of an otherwise somewhat egocentric attitude.

## Attachment perspective on individual differences within group context

The fifth chapter deals with the importance of attachment theory in exploring *individual differences* in the context of group behavior. Previous studies have found that attachment theory is a relevant framework for exploring individual differences in the context of group interactions (e.g., Rom & Mikulincer, 2003). We focused on the ways people react to inductions of group respect and disrespect, with the assumption that, specifically, variations along the attachment anxiety dimension would determine the extent to which these inductions would affect commitment to this group, actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group, and money donation to the group.

Overall, we showed that feelings of belongingness to the group and engagement in group serving efforts following signals of group respect and disrespect are highly dependent on a person's attachment insecurities along the attachment anxiety dimension. This indicates that variations along the attachment anxiety dimension are extremely relevant for explaining individual differences in feelings of group commitment and expenditure of actual effort on behalf of the group following inductions of group respect and disrespect.

It seems that attachment-anxious group members who perceive themselves as disrespected react with strong worries about being accepted and approved by other group members and serious doubts about their commitment to the group. However, because they chronically seek others' love and approval and their sense of self-worth is based on others' positive feedback, they cannot cognitively or emotionally distance themselves from the rejecting group avoiding further damage to their self-worth. Rather, their strong need for others' love and acceptance might impel them to increase their contribution to the group and to spend more effort on behalf of the group as a means of getting some sign of group approval and respect thereby repairing their damaged sense of self worth. It appears that attachment-anxious people might attempt to satisfy and help the rejecting group, in the hope that they will be reevaluated and accepted by it.

As expected, our findings indicated that highly attachment-anxious participants were more strongly affected by both poles of respect (i.e., high respect and disrespect) than less anxious participants. That is, highly attachment-anxious participants, as compared to less anxious participants, reacted to the induction of high group respect with higher reports of group commitment and more effort expenditure in the first group task (faster completion of the task). However, they did not show such a pro-group

response in the second group task. These findings emphasize attachment-anxious individuals' hyper-sensitivity to signs of social approval and their over-dependence on external sources of self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). When feeling accepted and loved by their group, attachment-anxious participants strengthened their commitment to the group and actually displayed more pro-group behavior. That is, they may feel so grateful to the group for its approval and acceptance that they spend a lot of effort on behalf of the group. However, although such inductions of high group respect can increase highly attachment- anxious people's group commitment and pro-group behavior, one should note that these pro-group responses are driven by strong motives of social approval and strong self-relevant doubts. Thus pro-group behavior can decrease as time elapses from the high group respect feedback and no further positive feedback is given. In this case, anxious people's chronic self-related doubts may return and interfere with pro-group responses. Such absence of continual positive group feedback can thus explain why highly anxious participants reacted to high group respect with heightened expenditure of effort in the first group task but not in the second.

The reactions of attachment-anxious participants to the induction of group disrespect were especially interesting and in line with Sleebos et al.'s (2006a, 2006b) findings. As expected, highly attachment-anxious participants, as compared to less anxious participants, reacted to the induction of group disrespect with stronger worries about acceptance and approval from other group members and lower group commitment. Moreover, although being less committed to the rejecting group, they reacted to the induction of group disrespect with more money donation to the group and higher actual effort expenditure on behalf of the group. That is, attachment-anxious participants made a lot of real, concrete effort on behalf

of the group after being disrespected and even after reporting low commitment to the group.

These effects of group respect and disrespect inductions were not significant among less anxious participants. These participants showed no significant changes in group commitment or group-related worries following the receipt of high, moderate, or low group respect feedback. Moreover, they showed no increase in willingness to contribute to the group and actual pro-group behavior following inductions of high group respect or group disrespect. That is, less attachment-anxious people (i.e., more secure) seemed to be less influenced by group respect feedbacks. According to Mikulincer and Shaver (2004, 2005), these individuals are more likely to base their self-worth on domains that do not require constant external validation and therefore are less significantly affected by signals of group respect or disrespect. More secure individuals can mobilize caring qualities within themselves – qualities modeled on those of their attachment figures – as well as representations of being loved and valued by such figures. These representations act as authentic and highly stable sources of comfort and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), and can buffer the cognitive, emotional, and motivational impact of signals of group respect or disrespect.

Attachment avoidance was only found to weaken the effects of induced group disrespect on group-related worries. Specifically, participants scoring relatively low on attachment avoidance reacted to group disrespect with heightened worries about being accepted and valued by their group, whereas those scoring relatively high on avoidance showed no significant increase in group-related worries following the induction of group disrespect. That is, attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect.

Our research has emphasized the importance of attachment theory for exploring *individual differences* in the context of group behavior. We showed that feelings of belongingness to the group and engaging in group serving contributions are highly dependent on individual self representation from which a person perceives the world and reacts to it.

## Conclusion: three attachment styles and prosocial behaviors

Taking into account all the studies included, this thesis adds some insights into the mechanisms underlying different attachment orientations and their relation to caring and prosocial behavior. Our results support attachment theory and related research (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) which claims that although both anxious and avoidant people have difficulties in constructing an authentic, cohesive, and stable sense of self-worth, each of these attachment insecurities result in different self-configurations and disorders of the self, and thereby in different ways of dealing with other's distress and caring behavior.

**Avoidant individuals** appear to engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons to care for others, than secure individuals. Attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. Avoidant people tend to convince themselves and other people as strong and self-sufficient. This fits their defensive tendency to dismiss any signal of others' distress and to suppress painful emotions (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

Avoidant individuals with low morality level show higher motivation to volunteer for egoistic motives. One can refer to this attitude as "using others by helping them"; In "The Use of An Object and Relating Through

Identifications," Winnicott (1969) is concerned with the shift from a narcissistic attitude towards objects as extensions or projections of the self, to what most would regard as a more advanced mode of object-relating in which the object is recognized as separate and distinct from the self. The avoidant person with low morality level appears to use others to fulfill his egoistic needs, whereas avoidant individuals with high moral judgment appear to be less egoistic, and to be led by their moral reasoning more than by their emotional stance in elaborating reasons for volunteering.

Attachment avoidance was only found to weaken the effects of induced group disrespect on group-related worries. That is to say, attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. This finding fits the already observed cynical tendency of highly avoidant people to preserve a pretense of confidence, and to dismiss any signal of interpersonal rejection (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). However, one should note that we have assessed explicit manifestations of group-related worries, which can be easily affected by avoidant defenses. Perhaps the assessment of more implicit manifestations of these worries would reveal the negative emotional and cognitive impact that group disrespect might have even among highly avoidant people. In addition, it is also possible that the distress caused by our induction of group disrespect was not so strong, thereby allowing avoidant people to easily dismiss the worries it can cause. Probably more personally relevant instances of group disrespect could shatter avoidant people's defensive façade of self-worth and elicit heightened group-related worries.

As for **Anxious individuals**, although preliminary results have shown no significant correlation between anxious attachment and volunteerism (Gillath et al., 2005), further investigation indicated that highly anxious people actually do volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are

involved (i.e., self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, career promotion motivations). That is, they are not less likely to show caring behavior such as volunteering, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives and with their strong needs to feel love and acceptance (e.g., Cassidy & Kobak, 1988).

It appears that egoistic motivations are mediating the relation between anxious attachment and voluntary behavior. That is, highly attachment-anxious people volunteer mainly when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., highly anxiously attached participants are more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts mainly when they endorse self-centered reasons for volunteering),

Attachment-anxious people are hyper-sensitive to signs of social approval and their over-dependence on external sources of self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). They chronically seek others' love and approval and their sense of self-worth is based on others' positive feedback. These working models appear to also affect the ways in which they react to the induction of group disrespect; Attachment-anxious people show stronger worries about acceptance and approval from other group members and lower group commitment. On the other hand, they also react to the induction of group disrespect with heightened willingness to contribute to the rejecting group and higher actual pro-group behavior. Their pro-group responses are driven by strong motives of social approval and strong self-relevant doubts, and thus can disappear as time elapses from the high group respect feedback and no further positive feedback is given. Absence of continual positive group feedback might interfere with their long term pro-group caring responses.

**Attachment security** is generally associated with higher volunteerism to care for and to help people for other-focused reasons. Secure attachment

includes positive representations of oneself as worthy and competent (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). During interactions with available, sensitive, and supportive attachment figures, people find it easy to perceive themselves as valuable, lovable, and special, thanks to being valued, loved, and regarded as special by caring attachment figures. Moreover, they learn to view themselves as active, strong, and competent and mobilize caring qualities within themselves – qualities modeled on those of their attachment figures – as well as representations of being loved and valued by such figures, and these representations act as authentic and highly stable sources of comfort and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), provide a base of buffering the impact of signals of group respect or disrespect, and promote empathy, caring and prosocial behavior.

Overall, this thesis emphasizes the importance of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) in explaining caring, prosocial behavior. Further studies using interview-based measures and assessing actual caring behavior, are necessary to increase our confidence in the validity and generalizability of the observed links between the systems of attachment and caregiving. It apears that feelings of belongingness to the group and engaging in group serving contributions are highly dependent on individual self representation from which a person perceives the world and reacts to it.

## Limitations of the current studies.

Although we reported studies conducted in three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States), using both correlation and experimental methods, one has to keep in mind that we looked at student samples from western societies and used self-reports measures. It is recommended that future studies will examine a wider variety of subjects,

add more objective measure and extend the causal methods to examine the effects of individual differences in attachment insecurities on caring behavior within different context (e.g., groups, parenting, working relations) and devise ways of increasing people's compassion, caring and effective altruism.

A future research might focus on experimental methods. Attachment security can be manipulated by making it temporarily accessible by priming, in order to examine the effects of manipulated attachment patterns on volunteerism. This would help researchers to address the limitation of the correlational studies between attachment patterns and volunteerism.

It would be fascinating to examine whether prosocial behavior as emerging in insecure attachment individuals, is related or mediated by understanding of other's mental states, as indexed by the theory of mind. "Theory of mind" refers to the capacity to envision mental states in self and others and try to explain the difficulties in understanding other people's beliefs, attitudes, and emotions. It has been extensively studied in both normal and abnormal development, especially in individuals with autism and Asperger syndrome (Baron-Cohen, 2001; Baron-Cohen, Leslie, & Frith, 1985; Frith, 2000). Fonagy and Target (1997) suggest that the ability to mentalize, to represent behavior in terms of mental states, or to have "a theory of mind" is a key determinant of self-organization which is acquired in the context of the child's early social relationships. They present evidence for an association between the quality of attachment relationship and reflective functioning in the parent and the child. Apparently, examining insecure attached individuals from the perspective of the "theory of mind" might create important insights into their reflective functioning and uncover new directions for treatment which will allow insecure individuals to

understand themselves and others better, to take other's perspective, and perhaps develop a more caring attitude toward others.

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# Summary

# Summary

This thesis aimed to examine the relevance of attachment insecurities (avoidance, anxiety) in explaining prosocial behavior, and by so doing to conceptualize individual and group prosocial behaviors in terms of Bowlby and Ainsworth's attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982).

To date there have been relatively few theoretical analyses which considered the role of attachment insecurities as they relate to caregiving as a prosocial behavior in individual and group settings (see Penner, 2002; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000, for preliminary efforts). In terms of the resource theory (Wilson and Musick, 1999), one can ask to what extent does secure attachment provide a meaningful resource for prosocial behavior, and at what level can this behavior be suppressed or over-ridden by attachment insecurity (Kunce & Shaver, 1994).

Mikulincer and others (e.g., Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nitzberg, 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005; Feeney & Collins, 2001) have argued that only a relatively secure person can easily perceive others not only as sources of security and support, but also as suffering human beings who have important needs and therefore deserve support.

The research aimed to examine the relevance of attachment insecurities (avoidance, anxiety) in explaining prosocial behavior. Beyond conceptualizing individual and group prosocial behavior, in terms of attachment theory (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982) we wanted to examine the unique explanatory power of attachment patterns beyond the potential contribution of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism, and agreeableness) to

caring behavior. Another purpose was to examine the role of moral judgment in the relation between attachment insecurities and volunteerism. Finally, we suggested to apply attachment theory in understanding intra-group caring behavior.

Initial studies took place across three different countries (Israel, the Netherlands, and the United States). The findings reveal that the two dimensions of attachment insecurity – anxiety and avoidance – are related to prosocial behavior, as measured by real-world altruistic volunteering. *Avoidant individuals* engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons than secure individuals to care for others. *Anxious individuals* are not less likely to volunteer, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives (self-protection, self-enhancement, social and career motives). It appears that those self-centered motives play an important role in mediating the links between attachment anxiety and volunteering behavior, whereas attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. *Attachment security*, as defined in terms of low scores on the attachment anxiety and avoidance dimensions, is generally associated with higher prosocial altruistic behavior and caring for people for other-focused reasons.

The importance of attachment security is enhanced by the findings of its unique contribution to prosocial behavior, beyond the explanatory power of high-order personality traits (e.g., extraversion, neuroticism). Although these traits were associated with both attachment orientations and volunteerism, they failed to explain the link between attachment and volunteerism.

Considering moral judgment brings into focus the egocentric motives for volunteering of avoidant individuals; The findings show that while

anxiously attached individuals show self centered reasons, regardless of their level of morality, avoidant individuals report more egocentric reasons for volunteering (i.e., self-protection and self-enhancement reasons) when their level of moral judgment is low.

Finally, our research has emphasized the importance of attachment theory for exploring individual differences, also in the context of group behavior. We showed that feelings of commitment as well as engagement in group serving efforts and donation to the group following signals of group respect and disrespect are highly dependent on a person's attachment insecurities along the attachment anxiety dimension; for highly attachment-anxious participants, high group respect heightened group commitment and effort expenditure on behalf of the group, whereas group disrespect led to lower group commitment but to more money donation to the group and higher effort expenditure. Less attachment-anxious participants were not significantly affected by group respect or disrespect. Attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. The findings stress the importance of individual self representation from which a person perceives others and reacts to them.

Taking into account all the studies included, this thesis adds some insights into the mechanisms underlying different attachment orientations and their relation to caring and prosocial behavior. Our results support attachment theory and related research (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002) which claims that although both anxious and avoidant people have difficulties in constructing an authentic, cohesive, and stable sense of self-worth, each of these attachment insecurities result in different self-configurations and disorders of the self, and thereby in different ways of dealing with other's distress and caring behavior.

**Avoidant individuals** appear to engage in fewer volunteer activities and are less motivated by altruistic, other-focused reasons to care for others, than secure individuals. Attachment avoidance has a direct negative effect on participation in volunteer activities without the mediation of other-focused reasons for volunteering. Avoidant people tend to convince themselves and other people that they are strong and self-sufficient. This fits their defensive tendency to dismiss any signal of others' distress and to suppress painful emotions (e.g., Fraley & Shaver, 1997).

Avoidant individuals with low morality level, shows higher motivation to volunteer mainly for egoistic motives. One can refer to it as "using other by helping them"; In "The Use of An Object and Relating Through Identifications," Winnicott (1969) is concerned with the shift from a narcissistic attitude towards objects as extensions or projections of the self, to what most would regard as a more advanced mode of object-relating in which the object is recognized as separate and distinct from the self. The avoidant person with low morality level appears to use others to fulfill his egoistic needs.

Attachment avoidance was only found to weaken the effects of induced group disrespect on group-related worries. That is to say, attachment avoidance seemed to counteract the activation of group-related worries produced by group disrespect. This finding fits the already observed cynical tendency of highly avoidant people to preserve a pretense of confidence, and to dismiss any signal of interpersonal rejection (see Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003, for a review). However, one should note that we have assessed explicit manifestations of group-related worries, which can be easily affected by avoidant defenses. Perhaps the assessment of more implicit manifestations of these worries would reveal the negative emotional and cognitive impact that group disrespect might have even among highly avoidant people. In

addition, it is also possible that the distress caused by our induction of group disrespect was not so strong, thereby allowing avoidant people to easily dismiss the worries it can cause. Probably more personally relevant instances of group disrespect could shatter avoidant people's defensive façade of self-worth and elicit heightened group-related worries.

As for **Anxious individuals**, although preliminary results have shown no significant correlation between anxious attachment and volunteerism (Gillath et al., 2005), further investigation indicated that highly anxious people actually do volunteer when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., self-protection, self-enhancement, social approval, career promotion motivations). That is, they are not less likely to show caring behavior such as volunteering, but their reasons for volunteering are often tinged with self-centered motives and with their strong needs to feel love and acceptance (e.g., Cassidy & Kobak, 1988).

It appears that egoistic motivations are mediating the relation between anxious attachment and voluntary behavior. That is, highly attachment-anxious people volunteer mainly when egoistic motivations for volunteerism are involved (i.e., highly anxiously attached participants are more likely to engage in volunteer activities than their less anxious counterparts mainly when they endorse self-centered reasons for volunteering),

Attachment-anxious people are hyper-sensitive to signs of social approval and their over-dependence on external sources of self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). They chronically seek others' love and approval and their sense of self-worth is based on others' positive feedback. These working models appear to also affect the ways in which they react to the induction of group disrespect; Attachment-anxious people show stronger worries about acceptance and approval from other group members and lower group commitment. On the other hand, they also react to the induction of

group disrespect with heightened willingness to contribute to the rejecting group and higher actual pro-group behavior. Their pro-group responses are driven by strong motives of social approval and strong self-relevant doubts, and thus can disappear as time elapses from the high group respect feedback and no further positive feedback is given. Absence of continual positive group feedback might interfere with their long term pro-group caring responses.

**Attachment security** is generally associated with higher volunteerism to care for and to help people for other-focused reasons. Secure attachment includes positive representations of oneself as worthy and competent (e.g., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). During interactions with available, sensitive, and supportive attachment figures, people find it easy to perceive themselves as valuable, lovable, and special, thanks to being valued, loved, and regarded as special by caring attachment figures. Moreover, they learn to view themselves as active, strong, and competent and mobilize caring qualities within themselves – qualities modeled on those of their attachment figures – as well as representations of being loved and valued by such figures, and these representations act as authentic and highly stable sources of comfort and self-worth (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), provide a base of buffering the impact of signals of group respect or disrespect, and promote empathy, caring and prosocial behavior.

Overall, this thesis emphasizes the importance of attachment insecurities (anxiety, avoidance) in explaining caring, prosocial behavior. Further studies using interview-based measures and assessing actual caring behavior, are necessary to increase our confidence in the validity and generalizability of the observed links between the systems of attachment and caregiving. It apears that feelings of belongingness to the group and

engaging in group serving contributions are highly dependent on individual self representation from which a person perceives the world and reacts to it.

It is recommended that future studies will examine a wider variety of subjects, add more objective measure and extend the causal methods to examine the effects of individual differences in attachment insecurities on caring behavior within different context (e.g., groups, parenting, working relations) and devise ways of increasing people's compassion, caring and effective altruism.

# Appendix A

## Samenvatting

## (Summary in Dutch)

# Gehechtheid, zorg en pro-sociaal gedrag

Dit proefschrift heeft tot doel de relatie tussen onveilige gehechtheid (vermijding, angst) en prosociaal gedrag te onderzoeken en als afgeleide hiervan individueel prosociaal gedrag en prosociaal gedrag in groepsverband in termen van de gehechtheidstheorie van Bowlby en Ainsworth te conceptualiseren (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1969/1982).

Tot op heden zijn er weinig theoretische kaders waarin angstige gehechtheid een rol speelt in de verklaring van prosociaal gedrag in individuele – en groepsituaties (zie Penner, 2002; Snyder, Clary, & Stukas, 2000, voor eerste pogingen). Het is van belang te onderzoeken in welke mate een veilige gehechtheid een relevante bron voor prosociaal gedrag kan zijn (Wilson & Musick, 1999), en in welk mate dit gedrag door onveilige gehechtheid onderdrukt of terzijde geschoven kan worden (Kunce & Shaver, 1994). Volgens Mikulincer en anderen (b.v.., Mikulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nitzberg, 2005; Gillath, Shaver, & Mikulincer, 2005; Feeney & Collins, 2001) is het alleen voor een persoon die zich relatief veilig voelt mogelijk om anderen niet slechts als bron van veiligheid en steun waar te nemen, maar ook als lijdend persoon met belangrijke behoeften te zien die om die reden steun behoeft.

Het onderzoek had tot doel de relatie tussen onveilige gehechtheid (vermijding, angst) en prosociaal gedrag te onderzoeken. Naast de conceptualisering van individueel prosociaal gedrag en prosociaal gedrag in groepsverband in termen van de gehechtheidstheorie, proberen we de unieke verklarende kracht van gehechtheidsstijlen te onderzoeken die verder gaat dan de potentiële bijdrage van algemene persoonlijkheidseigenschappen aan

de verklaring van altruistisch gedrag. Daarnaast wilden we de rol van morele oordelen in de relatie tussen onveilige gehechtheid en vrijwilligerswerk onderzoeken. Om beter inzicht te krijgen in altruistisch gedrag in groepsverband, hebben we ten slotte een beroep gedaan op de gehechtheidsheorie.

De studies werden in drie verschillende landen uitgevoerd (Israël, Nederland en de Verenigde Staten). De resultaten tonen aan dat de twee dimensies van onveilige gehechtheid – angst en vermijding – in verband staan met prosociaal gedrag, zoals gemeten met behulp van daadwerkelijk (mogelijk altruïstisch) vrijwilligerswerk. Vermijdende personen nemen minder deel aan vrijwilligerswerk en zijn minder door altruïstische en op anderen gerichte redenen gemotiveerd om voor anderen te zorgen dan mensen die zich veilig voelen. Angstige personen zijn niet minder geneigd aan vrijwilligerswerk deel te nemen, maar hun redenen voor vrijwillige aktiviteiten zijn vaak zelfzuchtig (zelfbescherming, zichzelf verheffen; motieven die op het sociale vlak en carrière berusten). Het lijkt erop dat deze zelfzuchtige motieven een belangrijke rol spelen in de relatie tussen angstige gehechtheid en het gedrag van een vrijwilliger, terwijl vermijdende gehechtheid een direct negatieve invloed heeft op het deelnemen aan vrijwilligerswerk.

Veilige gehechtheid, zoals gedefiniëerd in termen van lage scores op angstige en vermijdende gehechtheidsdimensies, is geassocieerd met meer prosociaal altruïstisch en zorgzaam gedrag, geïnspireerd door op-anderen-gerichte motieven. Het belang van veilige gehechtheid wordt versterkt door de unieke bijdrage die zij levert aan de verklaring van prosociaal gedrag en gaat verder dan de verklarende invloed van persoonlijkheidseigenschappen (zoals extraversie en neuroticisme). Hoewel deze eigenschappen geassocieerd zijn met gehechtheidsoriëntaties en vrijwilligerswerk, is de

verbinding tussen gehechtheid en vrijwilligerswerk niet uitsluitend op grond van deze eigenschappen te verklaren.

We hebben laten zien dat het gevoel van verplichting om de groep van dienst te zijn en de daadwerkelijke inspanning om aan de groep bij te dragen, afhankelijk zijn van de gehechtheidsstijl van een persoon. Voor proefpersonen met een angstige gehechtheid verhoogde het respect van de groep het gevoel van verplichting ten opzichte van de groep en de inspanning ten bate van de groep, terwijl gebrek aan respect van de groep tot een verminderd gevoel van verplichting leidde, maar ook tot grotere bijdragen aan het groepsbelang (in de vorm van hogere gelddonaties) en verhoogde daadwerkelijke inspanning ten bate van de groep.

Deelnemers met een veiliger gehechtheidsstijl werden nauwelijks beïnvloed door het respect of het gebrek aan respect van de groep. De resultaten benadrukken het belang van individuele zelfrepresentatie van waaruit een persoon anderen waarneemt en op hen reageert.

Gelet op wat tot op heden in de literatuur bekend is, voegt dit proefschrift inzicht toe in de samenhang van verschillende gehechtheidsstijlen met altruïstisch, zorgzaam en prosociaal gedrag. Onze resultaten ondersteunen de gehechtheidstheorie en haar verklarende waarde voor altruïsme (b.v., Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Cassidy & Kobak, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2003; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2002). Zowel angstige als vermijdende mensen hebben moeite om een authentiek, bindend en stabiel gevoel van eigenwaarde op te bouwen, wat leidt tot verschillende manieren om met verdriet van de ander en de behoefte aan zorg van medemensen om te gaan. Vermijdende personen hebben de neiging zichzelf en anderen te overtuigen dat ze sterk en en onafhankelijk zijn. Dit past bij hun defensieve neiging om ieder signaal van het verdriet van een ander van de hand te wijzen en pijnlijke emoties te onderdrukken (b.v. Fraley &

Shaver, 1997). Vermijdende personen met een laag moreel niveau nemen voornamelijk vanuit egoïstische motieven deel aan vrijwilligers werk: "een ander te gebruiken door hem te helpen'

Wat angstig-gehechte personen betreft, zij doen vrijwilligerswerk, wanneer egoïstische motieven bij het verrichten van vrijwilligerswerk betrokken zijn (b.v. motieven die gebaseerd zijn op zelfbescherming, zichzelf verheffen, maatschappelijke goedkeuring, bevordering van de loopbaan). Zij zijn niet minder geneigd zorgzaam en altruïstisch gedrag te tonen zoals het deelnemen aan vrijwilligerswerk, maar hun redenen hiervoor zijn gebaseerd op hun sterke behoefte aan liefde en acceptatie (b.v, Cassidy & Kobak, 1988). Angstig gehechte personen zijn overgevoelig voor signalen van maatschappelijke goedkeuring en zijn overmatig afhankelijk van externe bronnen van eigenwaarde (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Zij zoeken onophoudelijk de liefde en goedkeuring van anderen en hun gevoel van eigenwaarde is gebaseerd op de positieve feedback van anderen.

Veilige gehechtheid is geassocieerd met een sterkere neiging tot vrijwilligerswerk, en de motieven daarvoor zijn vaker altruïstisch. Een veilige gehechtheid houdt positieve representatie van zichzelf in als een waardevol en competent persoon (zie bijv. Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). Veilig gehechte personen mobiliseren altruïstische eigenschappen in zichzelf – eigenschappen die overeenstemmen met hun beeld van hun eigen gehechtheidsfiguren. Veilige representaties fungeren als authentieke en stabiele bronnen voor gevoelens van eigenwaarde (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2004), en als basis voor verwerking van respect of gebrek aan respect van de groep. Ze versterken daardoor empathie, en zorgzaam en prosociaal gedrag relatief onafhankelijk van groepsdruk.

Toekomstige studies zouden meer objectieve metingen moeten gebruiken voor gehechtheidsstijl, vrijwilligerswerk en altruïsme, en methoden moeten ontwikkelen en toetsen om het vrijwilligerswerk, de zorgzaamheid voor de ander, en effectief altruïsme te bevorderen. In dit proefschrift hebben we laten zien dat de gehechtheidstheorie hiervoor vruchtbare aanknopingspunten biedt.

# Appendix B

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# Appendix C

## Curriculum Vitae

Ayelet Erez works as a Clinical and Educational Psychologist. She specializes in parent child psychotherapy: A psychodynamic approach to the treatment of relational disturbances in young children. She was born October 18, 1965 in Israel. She is married and a mother of four children. Ayelet graduated "Katzenelson" high school in kfar- sava in 1983. She completed her BA in psychology and special education at Haifa University in 1989. Two years later, she accomplished her Masters degree at Bar Ilan University, in clinical child psychology. Since 1991 she has worked as an educational psychologist specializing in learning disabilities and inclusion of children with special needs. She received her expert diploma in educational psychology in 1998. Throughout her clinical training, Ayelet has mainly worked with young children and their caregivers. She has also worked at a boarding school for highly emotionally and behaviorally disturbed children. After four years of research at Leiden University, she continued her clinical work, integrating her interest in attachment theory and object relation theories into the clinical world of parent-child psychotherapy, psycho-trauma of young children, and psycho-diagnosis of developmental and emotional problems. She currently teaches at Haifa University and works at the clinical-developmental center of the Ministry of Health, in Haifa, Israel.